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DAUGHTERS.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE GAMBLER’S WIFE,” “SYBIL LENNARD,” &c.

“Sigh not for Children. Thou wilt love them much ;
And Care will follow Love.”

BARRY CORNWALL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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DAUGHTERS.

CHAPTER I.

“ I loved her when she looked from me,
And hid her stifled sighs :
I loved her, too, when she did smile
With shy and downcast eyes.”

* * * *

“ A kiss—a sigh—a little word
We changed, when we did part ;
No more ; yet read I in *his* eyes
The promise of his heart.”

Barry Cornwall.

THE next morning when Gerald Cameron presented himself at an early hour in Belgrave

Square, he was shown into the same drawing-room as on the preceding day. It was the room in which company was always received—a ceremony, he thought, which in this case might have been dispensed with, considering the visiter was but a brother to his sister.

“Mrs. Beauchamp had not yet finished her toilette,” he was told. Throwing himself on a sofa, he said he was in no hurry, and could wait an hour if necessary.

But the young man’s assumption of patience was not so genuine as he thus assumed, for when the servant had departed, he started up, threw down the book he had taken up, and an impatient listening demeanour overshadowed the expression of his countenance. For about ten minutes he heard nothing but the occasional shutting and opening of doors—nothing further transpired to interrupt his solitude.

“I wonder whether she will manage it,” he murmured. “I hope so; it will be so capital;

and really, I should like to see the poor young thing once more."

As he thus apostrophised, the door was opened abruptly, and there entered—or rather the tall slender figure of Agnes Beauchamp was pushed into the room by the shoulders; this act being performed by her elder sister Rachel, who said—

"Now don't be a goose, Agnes, but go and speak to Mr. Gerald Cameron; you are quite safe for ten minutes at least. I'll wait at this door, and Amelia has run round to do the same at the other, and we can give you warning in due time if the enemy is in view."

So saying, Rachel shut the door, and left Agnes standing abashed and shrinking, as if she would fain have run out again; but Gerald approached her with extended hands:—

"Ah, Miss Agnes, I am delighted to see you. I did not like to leave the country without;" Gerald added, as he drew her towards a

seat. "I hope you did not come against your inclination, but that you wished also to see me."

"Oh no, it was not against my inclination," Agnes said, lifting up her eyes with more assurance; "I am sure I am very glad to see you; but—but this is all so silly, this pushing me into the room, and all this hurry; and I am such a figure—" she said, turning round pettishly, as she caught a sight of herself in a large mirror, "in my dowdy school-room clothes."

"A figure?—a very pretty figure, I am sure," Gerald observed, although her toilette was certainly not of the most *soignée* description. However, he thought that the common-looking dress did not destroy the pleasing effect of the young form it concealed, and that the dark hair carelessly twisted behind the little ear disfigured not the small pale face with its large black eyes; and as she smoothed her somewhat disordered tresses, the action only

served to make the young man observe admiringly the thorough-bred form of the head and throat. He even could not quarrel with the faulty *chaussure*—although, like most of his sex, he was most particularly sensitive on that point—since the unsandalled slippers did not quite conceal that the feet they contained were slender and well-shaped. In fact, the months which had elapsed since the shrubby walk, although they seemed but to have accumulated upon the youthful countenance deeper marks of the wearisome oppression under which her spirit groaned, had also increased its interesting expression; and as Gerald thus regarded Agnes, the fun and malice which had chiefly urged him to seek this interview, began to yield to a softer and more serious feeling; and seeing her still look embarrassed and distressed, though she smiled at his compliments, some feeling of the same nature seemed to communicate itself to the young man, which for a moment checked his ease of look and manner.

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There was a moment's pause, serving but to increase the confusion of Agnes; she turned away and wept. Gerald rallied himself. Recovering his presence of mind, he took her hand, kindly and respectfully, and said—

“Oh do not weep, dear Agnes; do not send me away so very far, miserable as I shall be if this folly of your sister's and mine has cost you tears.”

“If they find me out!” again Agnes murmured, as if anxious thus to account for these tears; “to you it will be nothing, who are going out of the country”—here her voice was again choked by sobs—“but I——”

“Well!” Gerald exclaimed soothingly, “do not, pray, weep so bitterly, my sweet Agnes; your sisters will take care that they do not *find you out*. But if they do, you do not care for a few more black looks and harsh words—you must be pretty well accustomed to such things by this time I should think.”

“Oh yes—and it is not that either which

makes me weep, although it is not, certainly, very agreeable to be teased and railed at and punished like a child—even struck, as I have been, by my mother”—she added moodily.

“ Good Heavens! you do not mean to say that your mother has ever lifted up her hand against you,” exclaimed Gerald, with indignant surprise painted on his countenance. After a moment’s pause, he continued—“ I wish I could take you off to Gibraltar with me—away from all these horrors, Agnes.”

The young girl lifted up her eyes with a quick eager glance to Gerald’s face.

“ Would you like it, Agnes?” he inquired, as he marked with interest the expression his words had produced on his companion’s countenance.

“ Like it!” she exclaimed passionately, extending her arms; “ yes, anywhere!” But, ashamed and sorrowful, she added, “ Anywhere to fly away and be at rest!”

Her head drooped upon her bosom as Ge-

rald gazed on her in silence. At length he said, somewhat coldly—

“Then I presume, Agnes, you would not care who you went off with, so you got away from home? I suppose any one would answer that purpose equally well who could manage it—as you do not care a straw for me. Is it not so?” and he tried to look into her face, which only sank lower and lower on her bosom.

“Now I dare say,” pursued Gerald, “you would as soon go off to Gibraltar with my brother Alick, if he were to ask you, or any one else;”—his earnestness seemed to increase with her confusion.

At these last words, Agnes looked quickly up, with an expression half petulant, half reproachful; her eyes swimming with indignant tears.

“No!” she exclaimed, “I don’t know your brother—I have never seen him—never thought of him; how can I care for him, or any one else? How can I *love* any one——

but——you—who have been so kind to me?" she murmured with crimson cheek, in a low, hurried, but earnest tone.

Gerald, without further hesitation, caught her in his arms, and pressed her slender trembling form to his heart.

"Well, is your interview over?" I dare not let you stay much longer, for Lena will be very soon here now," interposed Rachel at that critical moment, as she suddenly opened the door and stepped in before them; Amelia from her post doing the same, in order to facilitate the flight of Agnes in case of the alarm which Rachel's warning foretold. Both girls stood gazing in no small surprise, and the eldest in no little dismay, at the scene which their abrupt intrusion had interrupted.

They certainly had no idea that the flirtation to which they had lent their aid was to be carried on so completely *con amore*.

At the sound of the opening door, Gerald had partly released Agnes from his embrace,

and she, panting and breathless, had turned a glance of terror towards it. But she was reassured on perceiving who were the intruders; and Gerald, careless of their presence, again approached Agnes, and in a low, hurried tone of voice, said, "Dear, dear girl, it cannot be now; I fear it would be impossible to manage it, for I am obliged to depart this very day; but depend upon it, I shall not be long away—as short a time as I possibly can manage—and then—then, when I come back—we *will* be happy, in spite of them all—trust me, dear Agnes, for that. Here," he continued in a hurried manner, "take this in remembrance of this interview—as a pledge of my love—this ring; my mother gave it to me. Look at it whenever you are most miserable, and cheer yourself with the thought, that your troubles will soon have an end. And you—what will you give me?"

"What—what indeed?" gasped the agitated girl. "I have nothing—nothing."

“ Yes! this will be most precious!” and Gerald, seizing a pair of scissors from an open workbox on the table, severed without mercy a long tress from her hair. “ This is indeed a treasure!” he exclaimed, as he pressed it to his lips.

Rachel again interposed.

“ Agnes, you must really come now,” she said; “ I hear some one approaching;” and Agnes was dragged away between her two sisters.

“ There, now, Agnes,” they said, as they shut the bedroom door behind them, and Agnes seated herself upon the bed, bewildered and trembling, “ you had better collect your ideas to reappear before Miss Ricketts; and we must take care, or Lady Rachel——”

Agnes started on her feet at the mention of her mother’s name.

“ Oh, I am sure *you* need not care about anything now,” Amelia said in a tone of some pique—“ you, who have a *lover* to console you.

I am sure we are not so fortunate, are we, Rachel? It is a pity, however, that he is going to Gibraltar."

"Oh yes—yes," cried Agnes, laying her head despairingly upon the bed: "how shall I exist without him?—how bear all my wretchedness *now*?"

"*Now*? why much better than you did before, I should think," remarked Amelia.

"No, no, it will be more insupportable—maddening! Oh Gerald—dear Gerald!" And she pressed to her lips the treasured ring.

"How did all this begin?" persisted Amelia. But Rachel, who had stood somewhat thoughtful and grave, now interposed. She approached her young sister, saying with firmness, and somewhat of severity—

"Come, Agnes, get up! we must have no more of this nonsense. I think we have gone rather too far; and if you betray yourself, as you seem likely to do, by this behaviour, it will be a fine business for us all. So I advise

you, Agnes, to make haste and compose yourself, and return to the schoolroom, or all will be discovered by that lynx-eyed Miss Ricketts. There—do you not hear Lady Rachel's bell? She will soon be sallying forth. Come, give me your ring—you are not going to keep it, silly girl, for Miss Ricketts' edification. 'G. C.,' indeed!" she exclaimed, looking at the signet, which she took from Agnes' passive hand—for at the sound of the bell she had again started up—the loving woman restored by that dreaded sound to the cowed, frightened school-girl—smoothed her hair, and dried her eyes, gazing at the same time anxiously and fearfully at her sisters.

"Well, I will take care of your ring; and now let me finish the affair which has turned out such a pretty piece of business. Come along!" and Agnes was conducted back to the dismal schoolroom from which she had so nefariously absconded: and only waiting to see that all was right for the present, Rachel left

her to the tender mercies of Miss Ricketts.

Poor Agnes! with the signs of emotion still upon her countenance—her heart throbbing—her brain whirling—she strove with her trembling hand to resume the writing to which she was sternly motioned on her entrance.

All this excited no suspicion in her governess's eyes.

It was under the pretext of being commissioned by her mother to conduct her sister to her awful presence, that Miss Beauchamp had taken Agnes away; and the mysterious expression of compassion visible in Rachel's countenance whilst executing her warrant, had conveyed to Miss Ricketts very surely that some maternal *douceur* was about to be conferred upon the unhappy daughter.

How far was she from imagining the strange scene which had been enacted during that half hour's absence—the turn of thoughts and feeling which had been given to her pupil's

mind when she again bent over her weary task! Miss Ricketts only found her intolerably dull, *distract*, careless, and even impatient.

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The coming footsteps had been those of a servant sent to inform Mr. Gerald Cameron—whom he found examining with great apparent interest the china ornaments on the chimney-piece—that Mrs. Beauchamp requested he would join her in her sitting-room; and Gerald was not sorry for this opportunity of recovering in some degree his composure ere he met his sister.

With the natural incautiousness of his disposition, he had been surprised, in the space of a few minutes, into changing an unmeaning frolic into an affair which he must henceforth consider as most serious, important, and binding.

The young man followed the servant to the *suite* of apartments appropriated to Lena's use. She rose from the sofa upon which she reclined, to greet him affectionately, but there was a slight constraint in her manner, which was accounted for by a half-open door discovering Mr. Beauchamp writing at a table in the adjoining apartment. Any doubt, therefore, as to whether he should let Lena into the secret of the morning or not, was at an end; and this was almost a relief, for besides the confession in itself being most embarrassing to make, Gerald was considerate enough to view the subject as one not fitted for his young sister's ear: she should not be dragged into it as a party in the clandestine business. He knew, too, that anything of the sort was so foreign to her experience—to her conception—that he could scarcely expect even her sympathy; certainly not her connivance. She, who had been brought up in principles of such

purity and openness, every thought, word, and deed, freely exposed to her parents!

“Dear Lena,” he thought, “she would only open wide her large eyes, look shocked and frightened, and henceforth turn red and pale, and become nervous and embarrassed, whenever my name was mentioned.”

Better, then, as it was; he therefore did not feel quite so much inclination as he would otherwise have done to rise and slam to the door, when, ever and anon, though Mr. Beauchamp had not come forward to greet him, he beheld the light eyes of his brother-in-law lifted up from his pursuit to stare upon them, with cool though keen observance.

Nothing like confidential or intimate conversation could proceed between the brother and sister under such evident *espionage*.

“You are tired, I am afraid, dear Lena, this morning,” he said, as she resumed her reclining position on the sofa. “You look quite like an invalid.”

“I do not feel tired,” said Lena; “but Mr. Beauchamp——”

“Says you are!” Gerald rejoined, laughing.

Lena, with an alarmed look, turned her eyes towards the opposite apartment.

“He wishes me,” she continued, “to keep quiet.”

“Old woman!” Gerald thought within himself; but merely said—

“Well! I suppose it is only at present. Where is the event to take place—here, or at the Towers?”

“I do not think it is quite decided,” Lena answered meekly.

“Which would you prefer?” asked her brother.

“I do not much mind,” she said, lowering her voice; and as she did so, the sound of the scratching pen in the next room ceased.

“Of course, my mother will be in attendance?” Gerald continued.

The blood rushed to Lena's cheeks, and she turned her eyes upon his face, with anxious interest, as if she had rather hoped to have learnt something on that subject from her brother.

"But I suppose all that will be settled before November!" Gerald continued, seeing how little use it was questioning poor Lena on any point concerning family arrangements; "I am sure my mother will only be too charmed to come to you; to have such an excuse for a trip over the Channel," he added, smiling. "Besides, my father will have to come to London sometime thereabouts."

"Will he indeed, dear darling father?" said Lena, her eyes filling with tears. "Oh, how delightful it would be!" she added, thoughtfully. "Then, indeed, I hope my confinement will take place in London, unless, indeed"—and she paused with a sigh—"they come to the Towers."

And again she sighed, she scarcely knew

why, except it was from the strangely chastened feeling with which she contemplated this once most delightful of anticipations.

The conversation was now interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Beauchamp, who deemed the private interview, in which he had indulged his wife with her brother, sufficiently prolonged for every reasonable or desirable end.

“My dear Lena, how are you now? Not tiring yourself, I hope? Good morning, Mr. Cameron.”

Gerald rose immediately: he felt no inclination to linger any longer.

“Well, I must be off, dear Lena!” he exclaimed.

Lena rose, pale and tearful.

With moistened eyes Gerald pressed his sister in his arms; shook hands—for her sake—more graciously than he felt inclined to do with Mr. Beauchamp; and sadder—if not wiser—than when he entered, quitted the Belgrave Square mansion.

Two countenances ever haunted his imagination whilst far away from England—two young faces—and with the remembrance of each, a sharp pang smote his heart.

CHAPTER II.

“ It was the Spirit’s harmony,
The mind’s unbroken melody,
Breathing its sweetness through the whole ;
It was the glance that spoke a soul
All fearless in its purity ;
It was the sunny smile that drew,
Where’er it fell on this world’s tears,
Bright colours out—whose rainbow hue
Gave promise of less troubled years.”

Mrs. Conyngham.

“ How handsome and agreeable Lord Alfred is !” observed Mrs. Cameron, after one of the long firelight visits, which, as the short days drew in, it became his Lordship’s almost daily custom to pay to the General’s family.

“Very!” Janet took upon herself to answer from her low seat in the corner of the fire. But though her mother smiled at the ready reply, it was evidently not Janet’s concurrence in that opinion which could satisfy her; for she still glanced expectantly towards the opposite corner, where Annie sat with the little Laura on her knee.

She, too, thereupon lifted up her eyes, and answered, “Yes!” but carelessly, and with somewhat of surprise; for she had long known her mother’s exalted opinion of Lord Alfred, and wondered what should now make her think it necessary to start the praise of him anew.

After this little monosyllable, Annie again bent her head over her little sister’s shoulder.

“Do you think Frank handsome and agreeable too, mama?” asked Minny.

“Frank, indeed! You are on very intimate terms with Mr. Mildmay, I think, Minny.”

“Oh, he told me to call him Frank. He is

so kind and goodnatured. Don't you love him, Annie?"

Annie laughed, and tossed back her head, showing her cheeks celestial rosy red.

"I wonder we have not seen him to-day," she then said. Mama, does he dine here this evening?"

Mrs. Cameron replied, looking thoughtfully at her daughter—

"Yes he does, with Lord Alfred and one or two others."

"Lord Alfred again!" Annie remarked.

"Have you any objection, my dear? Do you wish us to confine our attentions to our little *aide-de-camp*, as I think my Annie has become rather too inclined to do?"

"I, mama?"

"Yes, Annie; the great art is to make oneself generally agreeable; and I have remarked that you do not assist me as much as you used to do. And though it may be very pleasant to sit comfortably in a corner, talking and laugh-

ing in a friendly way with young Mildmay, yet——”

“Oh, Mama,” Annie laughingly interrupted, “you know Papa thought I was becoming too forward, and so——”

“But, Annie,” said her mother, when the young girl paused abruptly in her speech, “you over-act your part. I assure you, Lord Alfred is quite jealous sometimes. He says—— ‘Miss Cameron is very partial, and very cruel: *I* never even have a word or a look!’”

“Oh yes!” replied Annie, curling her pretty lip, “that is because Lord Alfred thinks that every one’s looks and words should be for him, and no one else. He is very conceited, and very impertinent too,” Annie continued, with some irritation. “Do you know, he said to me last night, ‘Miss Annie, take care you do not become too fond of that little fellow.’ Little fellow! such a way to speak of Frank Mildmay! I am sure he is not so very little——quite

tall enough—and—and—as to being too fond of him——”

“ Well, Annie?” asked Mrs. Cameron, as Annie paused, for she wished to hear the sentence concluded.

“ I know,” she continued, “ I could be *much* fonder of him than of his Lordship, in spite of his six feet, and all the *et ceteras*.”

“ I will not have you disparage my favourite, Annie,” her mother smilingly replied, for such frankness gave her little uneasiness on the one important point: “ a handsome, delightful creature no one can pretend not to think him; and as to having a good opinion of himself, how can he help it, when every one but you, naughty little girl, conspire to give it to him? But did he really tell you not to become too fond of Frank Mildmay?” Mrs. Cameron inquired, with an amused and not ill-pleased expression on her countenance.

“ He did indeed, Mama.”

“ And what did you say? I hope—that there

was no fear of such a conclusion, and that you have been so intimate with him on account of his being a friend of the Duchess of Strathe-den.”

“ Oh no, Mama, I did not tell him all that, not considering such an explanation necessary, even if it had entered into my head. I only thought it was no business of his, and told his Lordship so as civilly as I could.”

“ I hope so indeed, Annie. You must not get into the way of making rude speeches—nothing men hate so much in a girl as *brusquerie* of manner.”

Annie might have felt how clear was her conscience of any such misdemeanour, and how more than usually inclined her mother seemed, to assume a tone of bitterness with regard to her conduct. However, she received the censure with cheerful submission.

“ Lord Alfred,” resumed Mrs. Cameron, “ is very kind to interest himself so much in you, Annie. He said something of the same sort to

me the other day, but not to warn me of *your* becoming too fond of Frank Mildmay, but of *his* becoming too fond of you."

"How very silly!" Annie exclaimed, in a tone of scornful warmth, at the same time colouring deeply. "What did he mean?"

"Why, silly girl! I think there is such a thing as a young man losing a heart to a pretty little lady, when she bestows so large a portion of smiles and kind words upon him."

It was silly of Mrs. Cameron to put such ideas into her daughter's head!

"Too fond of me!"

Annie turned away her head. Little Laura was gone; but she cast her beautiful eyes on the fire, and mused with an expression as of newly-awakened imaginings.

The mother might have deemed her hint—which she only considered of consequence as far as it might interfere with Lord Alfred's interest—had taken effect; for from that evening Annie's words to the young *aide-de-camp*

became few, her smiles less gay and unconstrained. And his mood, too, seemed to alter. The General would innocently rally him a dozen times a day, and tell him he was in love; so absent, so negligent, even on duties connected with his situation, had he become. Mrs. Cameron begged him to confide in her his ailments, and allow her to prescribe for him; for such unequal spirits and altered looks could only betoken bodily illness.

“Does he not look ill, Annie?” she would say, as they sat together; and Annie, for the observing glance necessary for the required assent, would raise her eyes towards Frank’s face, half shadowed by their jetty fringe, and say, “she really did not see that Mr. Mildmay looked so ill.”

And well might Annie have so said; for if she ventured to see at all, such remarks seldom failed to bring a bright flush to Frank Mildmay’s features.

But still, through all such altered demean-

nour, there was, on the young *aide-de-camp's* part, no diminishment of the intercourse which he enjoyed with the General's family; and though it was in that house he had found the melancholy which was gaining such ground over his spirits, he would as soon have thought of attempting its cure by flying from "the hearth and home" he so dearly loved, as the wounded man would endeavour to heal his pain by lopping off with his own hand the injured limb. He was young—he was inexperienced—if his conduct need excuse. He felt it was no wrong, no dishonour, indulging and fostering feelings, of which for long he knew himself to be the victim.

And he willingly yielded himself a sacrifice to the dangerous, fascinating flame—his spirit now bounding, now drooping beneath its power. But this state of affairs could not continue ever thus—how could it?

Can two young hearts beat in perfect sympathy, answering throb for throb, and long

remain silent and unconfessed? Why should they? Annie and Frank Mildmay could not tell, though for many a day they had suffered it so to be. They wondered much, indeed, that so it had been, when the moment came at length which broke the spell, and gave to their young hearts that joy, no tongue can express—that bliss which it is seldom the lot of human beings to taste more than once in life. We know not how it came to pass—what was the magic word, or look, or tone which did the work—perchance it was the circumstance of the young people finding themselves alone together—alone in the dim twilight, or rather firelight, hour.

Mrs. Cameron had not returned from a somewhat distant expedition she had taken that day with most of the children. We do not know what was the untoward accident which had prevented Annie from being of the party—perhaps a headache—for the eventide found her

seated in pensive mood near the large hearth, her hand leaning against the side of the fireplace.

Half an hour after, found her not alone—still on her lowly seat, but with her head thrown back—her eyes raised with trusting, innocent affection—her hand locked in that of Frank Mildmay—and he seated by her side, gazing down upon her in a dream of happiness unalloyed—love and tenderness lighting up his interesting countenance almost into beauty.

Yes! Frank Mildmay had been surprised into revealing the pent-up feelings of his heart, and Annie had confessed “with virgin pride” her answering affection.

“But your parents, Annie!” the lover said at length, the first pang of doubt disturbing the blissful dream that had entranced him. How often, alas! those honoured names must prove the awakening bugbear of many a young heart’s forgetful dream of love and joy!

But they did not come in any such guise to Annie's ears: as yet, she knew them but as associated with unbounded indulgence and affection; she had never had cause to experience their colder characters of prudence and duty.

She therefore only said—

“Yes, Frank—dear Papa and Mama; we must tell them when they return, that we love one another.”

“Yes, dearest Annie! but will that knowledge give them any satisfaction? On the contrary, may not it put an end to the happiness we are just beginning to enjoy—cause us, perhaps, to part?” said Frank, in a tone of some despondency, although Annie's last sweetly-sounding words, “that we love one another,” robbed even his sadly alarming suggestion of a great portion of its bitterness.

“I hope not, Frank,” argued Annie. “Papa is so kind, so anxious for his children's happiness. But why do you fear, Frank? Are you not rich?”

“ No, not rich, Annie !” her lover answered with a sad smile ; “ but not so poor as that I might not make one who loved me happy ; but——”

“ Then why fear at all, Frank ?” Annie interrupted. “ One who loved you must be happy and content to live in a cottage, on a dry crust. And my parents : what can they desire more for me than comfort and happiness ?”

“ Oh, they might truly expect much more—you so beautiful—so justly their pride—they might well desire for you more than to be the wife of a subaltern in the army, with but a few hundreds a year. Your mother, dearest—can you think that she will approve of it ? Oh, Annie ? I beseech you let us enjoy our happiness a little longer. Do not destroy it by the doubts and demurs which at least must follow your parents’ knowledge of what has passed ; delay the communication for a few days at all events.”

Annie paused for a moment, and bent her eyes more sadly on the ground. But the next moment she looked up, and said—

“ Oh no, Frank, I must not—I would not pass one single hour with such a secret hidden from them; it would be ungrateful to their trusting affection and indulgence. It would make our love, Frank, seem like something wrong—something to be ashamed of. No; depend upon it, Frank, my happiness will be consulted before any other consideration.”

“ Annie, you are right—quite right; my suggestion of anything like concealment was indeed unworthy and cowardly. I must try not to be so faint-hearted a lover; but when I remember what you are—so perfect, so lovely—however,” he added, “ I will hope everything. Who can but hope when looking on your bright hopeful face, Annie?”

And Annie's face was indeed the picture of hope and trustful love—a sun of gladness, be-

neath which the darkest waters of life must sparkle; a silvery light which must cause the thickest clouds to roll away from the world's changing firmament.

CHAPTER III.

“O, how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glory of an April day ;
Which now shows all the beauty of the Sun ;
And by and by a cloud takes all away.”

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

“Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met, and never parted,
We had ne’er been broken-hearted.”

Burns.

“ANNIE, ANNIE,” called Mrs. Cameron, on her return home that evening, not finding their daughter in the drawing-room—the interview which we left her engaged having broken up a few moments before she had fled elsewhere.

Annie soon responded to the call of her parents, and found them in her mother's dressing-room.

"Not dressed, my dear child!" her mother said, after the first affectionate greeting. "It is so late: go, darling, for we have no time to lose—put on your last pretty dress—Lord Alfred and a few others dine here to-day."

"Oh, Mama—Papa—wait one moment: I have something very particular to tell you."

The General turned as he was about to leave the room, and Mrs. Cameron desired Mansell, who had come to dress her mistress, to return again when she rang her bell, and with no small degree of curiosity prepared to receive the "very particular" information which Annie's countenance, as well as words, announced. She did not keep them long in suspense, though she felt a greater degree of nervous embarrassment trouble her than she had expected to experience. Standing between them

before the fire, her eyes bent upon the ground, she murmured—

“ I scarcely know how to tell you--what has passed this evening—but Frank Mildmay has been with me this evening, and——and——”

“ Good Heavens, what !” exclaimed the easily excited Mrs. Cameron, in hasty alarm.

“ What, my dear child ?” exclaimed the General, also quickly and anxiously.

“ And he told me,” faltered Annie, “ that— he loved me, dear Father,” and her cheeks were crimsoned; but she lifted up her eyes to her parents’ face with an expression of innocent calmness.

Mrs. Cameron looked at her husband in startled silence; and the General, after the pause of surprise occasioned by the unexpected declaration, turned gravely towards Annie.

“ That was rather imprudent on Frank Mildmay’s part,” he said.

“ *Imprudent!*—presumptuous—ridiculous—

impertinent! I should say," fired up Mrs. Cameron, indignation flashing from her eyes.

"Nay, Laura, be not so vehement!" interposed the kind-hearted General. "We must hear more about this affair first. You were quite right, Annie, dear, to tell us directly; and what did *you* say to this?"

"Oh, Papa——" Annie began timidly.

"I hope, indeed," Mrs. Cameron interrupted, "that you showed a proper degree of anger at his presuming to talk in such a manner to you, and that you behaved with discretion upon the occasion."

"Mama, how could I be angry?" the young girl beseechingly exclaimed.

"Why not angry, Annie?—how can you ask such an absurd question?"

"Because——because, Mama——I love Frank so very much myself."

"Ah! indeed, is that it, Miss Annie?" the General said, half dismayed, half amused, at

this frank avowal; whilst Mrs. Cameron exclaimed—

“How absurd, Annie! You know not what you say.”

“Absurd to love Frank Mildmay!” Annie rejoined, in an earnest deprecating tone. “Oh why, mother?”

Mrs. Cameron certainly had no better answer at the moment than that it was *wholly* inexpedient to cherish such an affection. She was so chafed and angry at this unexpected communication, that her expressive countenance plainly evinced the state of her mind.

And poor Annie, whose heart shrunk with pain from this almost first look of real displeasure she had ever received from her too-indulgent parent, turned for comfort to her father, laying her head caressingly on his arm, as he stood looking “more in sorrow than in anger” upon his darling child.

“And pray, where is Mr. Mildmay all this time?” inquired Mrs. Cameron.

“ He is dining at the barracks, Mama,” said Annie, but——” and she hesitated, and added, in a changed timid voice, “ I promised to send for him if——”

“ Oh !” said the General, “ we will not talk further upon this subject to-night—it will do us all good to sleep upon it—Mr. Frank and all—it will do him no harm.”

Annie begged her mother would excuse her from appearing below that evening. She shrunk particularly from the idea of meeting Lord Alfred, and encountering from his Lordship any of the light wit and playful raillery with which he had of late made it his custom to assail her, and which now touched too sensibly the chords of her feelings to be tolerated.

Mrs. Cameron did not combat her desire, but suffered it so to be ; and finishing her own toilette, told her, as she left the room, that she should come and talk to her immediately after dinner.

“ Do, dear Mama,” said Annie gratefully, for

she longed to pour forth more openly all the thoughts and feelings of her full heart into the ear of one she had ever found so tender and willing a sympathiser in time of need. Her mother's clouded countenance was but the effect of surprise—perhaps she was tired—she could not be really angry with her Annie!

Poor girl! she sat all the time of her mother's absence thinking of Frank—hoping all things—building bright castles in the air; her young spirit braced by hope and bright imaginings, she hailed with trustful and glad affection Mrs. Cameron's reappearance. Alas! she came but to scatter her fair fancies in the dust!

After a long hour's converse, the poor little girl went weeping bitterly to bed, having been assured by her mother, that for all reasons—wisest, discreetest, best—any idea of a marriage with Frank Mildmay must be a thing unthought of.

Every argument, however, fell unconvincingly on Annie's mind until one conclusive reason

was brought forward by Mrs. Cameron—that such an event would break her heart! To have, she said, whilst tears fell from her eyes, every hope and cherished expectation so cruelly destroyed, to see her child—so young—throwing herself away by making so miserable an engagement!—and what could it entail upon her but poverty and its consequent evils?

The affecting sight of her mother's tears, and the picture of the broken heart, how could Annie resist? But the flame of love called forth that evening was not so easily to be extinguished!—Oh no! the morrow brought forth its fresh revival, when in her parents' presence once more the young lovers met, and their case was discussed and canvassed—not coldly, and without sympathy, but with the anxiety and earnestness of parents, pitiful and tender to the young pure natural feelings of a beloved child.

Yet equally painful and unsatisfactory was the discussion to the two loving hearts—for

firm was the decree “that they were too young to wed—too *poor* to be united.” And not only this, but that no engagement could be permitted—the affair must be *wholly* at an end—indeed they must part at once.

But the distress and anguish this sentence occasioned was very trying to the indulgent feelings of both their judges. Many affecting scenes were suffered to be enacted before the pair could bring themselves to look with anything like fortitude on the hard decree.

Frank made attempts to absent himself from the General’s house, except on those hours when duty called him to it. Annie tried to endure his absence. But then they met abroad, and a word, or a look, would destroy it all. And then the General’s kind heart would melt at the woe-begone, beseeching countenance of his young *aide-de-camp*, and on parting with him after duty he could not sometimes resist saying, “Well, Mildmay, you had better come and dine with us to-day!” And

Mildmay would come, and once more would the lovers sit together, talk together, and dance together—but *not as lovers*, it was to be understood by all!

But how could any one who looked upon them, think that such an understanding had been established between them as long as the young *aide-de-camp* and the General's daughter breathed the same air together? All who beheld the two young creatures could not fail to be interested in so charming and well-suited a pair. Every heart was enlisted in a case—in these days so rare—of true *bonâ fide* love!

Yes!—for in these worldly days, old and young seem to have imbibed the spirit of the age. The education, the ways of the present period, seem to crush all natural affections—to render cold and calculating even the spontaneous feelings of the heart.

There never could have existed a passion more pure, more primitive, than this innocent girl's. Unchecked, untutored as she had ever

been from her birth, she was a complete child of nature; and she now loved as such. Her attachment had in it something of idolatry. Of the wordly distinctions of rank and fortune she thought nothing. It was the difference in his demeanour—in his kind, winning manner—from the others with whom she associated, that elevated Frank in her opinion. She would listen to him with charmed ear and downcast look of mute delight, and her cheeks would mantle with enthusiasm. Poor Annie! hers was love indeed—not such measured feelings as are now to be found—in the nineteenth century.

Annie Cameron had won all hearts by her beauty and amiability; and Frank Mildmay was popular and beloved by all his brother officers. Even Lord Alfred professed a great interest and sympathy in the affair, so that Annie was somewhat melted by his kindness, and would suffer him to talk to her on the subject. But

when, one day, during Frank's banishment, he had offered to be of any service to her in the way of communication with her favoured lover, Annie's honest open spirits received the idea with surprise, spurning it with disdain. His Lordship was not offended, but looked with no small increase of admiration on the beautiful high-minded girl, and only heartily wished she had taken a fancy to himself, instead of to the *little* Mildmay.

Annie's gratitude towards her parents was deepfelt. She remembered what girls in her situation often forget—how they had loved her, how they had trusted her; and she would have sacrificed even her love to her filial devotion. Without their consent she must not act—all must be clear and open to them. They must be right—dreadful as she felt their decree.

It was, as we have said, beautiful, this love of Annie Cameron's!

But the affair became too conspicuous, too

much talked of, to be suffered any longer. Some decided step must be taken—part they must.

Time had only brought more hostile force against the lovers—for Frank Mildmay's relations having heard what was passing, wisely and prudently refused to countenance him in any such rash proceeding, as marrying so young a girl without a farthing.

So the poor lover, beset on every side, could only put his trust in Annie's strength of love and constancy, to conquer her parents' prejudices. And she, his only hope—even she failed him!

Yes—one day the General sent for him, to hear, as he supposed, his final decree. But when he arrived at the door of the apartment into which he was about to enter, it slowly opened, and Annie appeared before him, her eyes red with weeping.

“My own sweet Annie!” he exclaimed.

“Dear Frank!” her pale lips responded, as

she suffered him to seize her hand, and press it fervently to his heart.

“Frank!” she murmured, “I am come——”

“Do not say that you have come to tell me that all hope is over—that I must leave you—that we must really part. Oh, do not be so cruel, Annie!”

“Cruel!” poor Annie echoed, with a reproachful smile. “Oh, Frank!”

“Forgive me, Annie, but indeed it would kill me to hear such a doom from your lips.”

“Then I ought not to have come here; for—Frank—dear Frank”—and Annie’s tears again gushed forth—“I *have* come to tell you so. Yes, it must be so: I have promised my father and mother to give up all thoughts of what would indeed have made me but too happy. But then, alas! I could not, would not, make them unhappy, or act in defiance of their commands. Oh, Frank, look not so reproachfully upon me, or you will break my heart;” and poor Annie wept bitterly.

“And I,” exclaimed Frank, despairingly; “what am I to do?”

The tears forced themselves down the young man’s cheeks, and he was pale as death.

“Annie!” he murmured, “such love as ours ought to overrule every other consideration. Will you, can you give me up for ever?”

“For ever, Frank?—that is a long, long, dreary word,” said Annie, lifting up her head, and trying to smile through her tears.

“Will you promise, then?” cried Frank, seizing her hand, a gleam of renewed hope brightening his countenance.

“Nay, Frank, I must promise nothing, for that would be breaking my word, which I have pledged to my parents. For the present, all, all must be over between us. Be courageous in spirit, as a soldier should be. For shame, Frank, that I, a weak girl, should have to preach courage to you,” she continued. “Look to brighter days—they may yet come.”

We will not dilate further upon this melan-

choly love-scene. The fortnight passed away, and once—only once more—Frank and Annie met. The General during that interval often saw the poor young man, and ever evinced towards him the affection of a father.

Mrs. Cameron had also several interviews with him, and sought to comfort and cheer him. But poor Annie beheld the eve of the departure of the regiment arrive, without the melancholy consolation of seeing her poor Frank once more to bid him adieu. Under the present circumstances it was considered expedient, that young Mildmay should relinquish his staff situation and return to his regimental duties.

The officers of the — Hussars came to eat their farewell dinner at the General's. It was rather a melancholy party: many regretted this premature summons—the — Hussars being ordered to take the place of some other regiment suddenly ordered to India.

All were sorry to take leave of the family by

whose hospitality their *sejour* at Athlone had been rendered so agreeable.

All felt, too, for the pretty Annie, who, though she strove hard to exert herself, looked so pale and dispirited—so different from the bright joyous little creature that had greeted their arrival; and it was at least a gratification to her parents in the midst of their annoyance to perceive that Annie had excited respect and admiration from all, by the manner in which she had borne herself throughout the trying business.

A few other ladies having been invited to join the party, to disperse the gloom, in which she herself most largely participated, Mrs. Cameron sat down to the piano, and struck a few chords of a waltz.

One or two of the young men availed themselves of the idea, and persuaded the little girls and the other young ladies to take a few turns, but all were too considerate to ask Annie to dance.

Lord Alfred sat down by her side, and Mrs. Cameron, from the piano, looked upon them, and sighed bitterly within herself.

“ Daughters ! daughters ! ”—Careful comforts indeed she began to think they were ! It was distracting the idea—how it was, and how it might have been ! That troublesome little *aide-de-camp*—would that he had never entered their walls ! Mrs. Cameron looked shortly after in the direction of Annie : Lord Alfred was gone, and in his place sat a pale spectre-like image of him whom her thoughts reviled.

Yes, it was indeed poor Frank Mildmay. A sudden irresistible impulse had led him to come and see his poor Annie once more ; and absorbed in their own miserable feelings, the young pair sate pale and woful, gazing upon one another ; Annie silent, and speaking only by her large melancholy eyes, and Frank murmuring in her ear broken expressions of sorrow and despair.

“ Annie, shall we have one waltz together—

one more—the last perhaps we may ever dance with one another?”

The plaintive tone and look could not be resisted. Annie rose mechanically, and all were startled and moved by the unexpected sight of the sad couple, flying round so despairingly as it were, and with such pale anguish upon their countenances.

“ Oh, Annie, Annie, why did you choose me as your partner, that first night of my arrival?—why did you make me love you?”

Some such strains might have been heard breathed—or—

“ Frank—Frank—I cannot bear this any longer. Stop—stop—my heart will burst!—Let me go.”

One parting embrace, and then Annie was gone, and Frank Mildmay left standing alone, his head leaning against the door, motionless, entranced with misery.

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On the morrow the — Hussars set forth upon their march. Their road led them past the mansion of the General, who, standing at the gates with his family, received from each man his parting military salute.

It was a striking scene to watch the bright array pass by, on that fine February morning, followed by the cheering crowd which generally attend on such occasions; the gay parting tune played by the band, sounding so clearly in the frosty air.

But Annie, as she strained her eyes down from the solitary chamber into which she had flown, gazed upon the glittering show, and saw it but as a dark funereal procession, bearing her lover from her sight for ever.

Yes, from the window she beheld the march of the departing troops. “Frank! Frank!” she murmured despairingly, as she strained her aching gaze after him, as the morning sun glittered about his figure, and his plume waved in the breeze.

Lord Alfred looked up, smiled, and waved his hand to the party below. But young Mildmay rode past, his eyes bent upon the ground, only raising his hand mechanically to his head for the general salute.

The music broke forth in wilder, louder strains—a solemn dead-march they sounded to Annie Cameron’s ears. Once more she looked—her eyes caught Frank Mildmay’s retreating figure; it passed away like a bright vision from her sight, and left her all in darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Years to a mother bring distress,
But do not make her love the less.”

Wordsworth.

“ And thou wert sad—yet I was not with thee ;
And thou wert sick, and yet I was not near.”

Byron.

“ My child ! they gave you to another—
A woman who was not thy mother.”

Wordsworth.

How many fresh grey hairs were added to Mrs. Cameron's head by the events of the last few weeks, is not recorded, but certain it is that they caused her to feel the increasing weight—if not of years—at least of daughters.

And the oppressed spirit of the mother entailed upon her friend the Duchess a long letter to that effect.

Coleridge says,

“I have known several who, when they find themselves uncomfortable, take up the pen and transfer as much discomfort as they can to their absent friends. But I have known only one of this sort,” he continued, “who, as soon as they take up the pen, instantly become dolorous, however snug and cheerful the minute before and the minute after.”

Now, if this last character did not apply to Mrs. Cameron, at least amongst the former she might often have been assigned a place. And this, perhaps, was chiefly owing to it not being at all in her nature to wish to make those immediately surrounding her the victims of her real or imaginary grievances. It was then to the disappointed mother ever a blessed relief to fly to her pen—hers truly the pen of a ready writer—and by its assistance indemnify-

ing herself for her home forbearance, by pouring forth her complaints to her friends.

Therefore on this occasion, when her husband was blessing Heaven for so strong-minded, patient, and cheerfully enduring a wife, and Annie for the cheering, sustaining support of so tender a mother, a most dolorous effusion was forthcoming for the perusal of her noble confident—lamentations on her misfortunes, copiously parenthesized, with congratulatory ejaculations on her friend's exemption from the troubles to which a mother is heir—congratulations not very likely to be appreciated by her, to whom they were offered—considering that it was in this very exemption the Duchess considered *her* troubles to consist: and even the fact of one of her friend Laura Cameron's daughters having had an unfortunate love affair with an *ineligible aide-de-camp*, in lieu of an eligible Duke's son—even this dire mischance had not the effect of turning the childless Duchess's patient resignation into gratitude

and complacency. But it was not with this one grievance that Mrs. Cameron swelled her budget of maternal troubles. There was one of a different kind, which had caused her of late an equal degree of anxiety—nay, even of sorrow.

She was now a grandmother. More than two months ago, her Lena had given birth to a daughter. This event, it had ever been understood, was to have taken place under her mother's superintendence, and up to the very time, Mrs. Cameron had been in daily expectation of the summons to England. The General had even made arrangements dependant on that proposed expedition.

No notice, however, was latterly taken of the enquiries upon the subject, made from time to time by Mrs. Cameron in her letters in allusion to her daughter's expected confinement; till finally came the formal announcement from Mr. Beauchamp of the event, with the simple addition that he hoped, ere long, Lena and

himself should have the pleasure of introducing their infant daughter to her maternal grandparents.

Having now stated the plain fact of Mrs. Cameron's just grievances on this score, and with the intention of bringing the reality shortly before the reader, we will not now detail all the mother's indignant expressions of feeling, on the wrong, and indeed cruelty of the case. That truly important and justly painful point dismissed, there was no lack of minor annoyances wherewith to swell the epistolary lament, amongst which Mrs. Cameron mentioned the inconvenient legacy of debt left to them by Gerald—the fruits of his thoughtless extravagance.

Ere, however, the letter was sent, a postscript had been added, containing the information, that a dispatch had just arrived from Mr. Beauchamp, graciously intimating, that if it were the intention of General and Mrs. Cameron to visit England shortly, it would give Lady

Rachel and himself much pleasure to see them at the Towers, and their daughter's feelings on the subject he need not express.

Lena had been somewhat delicate since her confinement, he added, and naturally desired to behold her parents, and he, Mr. Beauchamp, was anxious that they should satisfy themselves concerning their daughter's welfare, after so critical an era, as to the state of her health and constitution.

Taking advantage of this invitation, Mrs. Cameron and Annie purposed leaving Ireland, accompanied by the General, as soon as it possibly could be arranged.

But we must look back a few months, in order to detail the events connected with Lena Beauchamp's history.

November—the month destined to be the epoch of the birth of another member of the Beauchamp family, found the young mother expectant, with her husband and Lady Rachel, re-established in Belgrave Square—the girls

having been left at the Towers under strong and vigilant guard. And thus, with that dim, fearful dread, which must, under any circumstances, assail the heart of a young and inexperienced creature in her position, aggravated tenfold by the awful quiet and mysterious solemnity with which the coming event was awaited, poor Lena had seen her hour approaching—the London fog adding to the depression of her spirits—the over-careful, fidgetty anxiety of her husband, more irritating than soothing—the pompous lawgiving of Lady Rachel—ill supplying the tender, cheering encouragement so greatly needed in her case, which her own mother could have so well supplied.

And *why* she was not with her, she did not clearly understand, for her husband had once given her almost to conclude that if she wished it, her mother should be invited for the occasion, and she had written to her with that understanding; therefore, though her husband

had latterly begun to evade any decisive communication, and her mother in her letters to drop the direct mention of that arrangement, almost till the time came for their leaving the Towers, she had lived in the hope that all would be finally arranged as she so ardently desired. But no—her misgivings and disappointment were confirmed into agonizing certainty on the eve of their departure, by the discovery that it was Lady Rachel's intention to accompany them to London, to take upon herself the office poor Lena had trusted would have been so differently filled. And still further was the dreadful truth made known, by her husband's reply to the faint, piteous exclamation this discovery drew forth, of—

“Then Mama is not to be with me!”

“No, my dear Lena; I thought you were aware of that. Lady Rachel has kindly consented to attend you in your approaching confinement. It would have been a long journey for your mother; and she her-

self seems naturally to have considered, that being in such good hands rendered her presence unnecessary and uncalled for."

"But Mama would have come joyfully, I know, if we had only expressed the desire. I do wish she was to be with me—it is so very, very long since I have seen her;" and the tears rolled down the poor young creature's cheeks. Her situation excused her in her husband's eyes for the unusual degree, slight as it was, of passionate petulance of tone and manner.

"Only eleven months, my dear Lena!" Mr. Beauchamp answered with indulgent mildness; "not any such very extraordinary length of time for a married woman to be separated from her relatives. However, I hope ere long we may see them here. As our London visit next spring will be superseded by this present excursion, that season may be more convenient for your parents' visit to this country, and

they may then favour us with their company."

An unsatisfactory sigh was Lena's answer; and either so Mr. Beauchamp deemed it, or his conscience interpreted it as intending to convey a reproach; for he continued:—

"It is no fault of mine, Lena, that your mother is not to attend you; for although I am perfectly satisfied with the experience and superior claims of my own mother to superintend the birth of her son's first child, yet I should have been happy to have gratified you by your mother's presence, if she had more urgently proposed it. It could scarcely, however, be expected that she should wish to leave all her home cares and duties for the daughter for whom she had so well provided!"

Poor Lena! she was too humble and unexpecting not to think that in this last reason there might be some truth; and although in her heart something still told her that one word of direct invitation would have brought

her mother immediately to her side, yet the idea which her husband's words conveyed, that it was scarcely to be expected that she should leave her many ties for one who was cut off by her marriage from any right to her mother's interference—engaged as that mother was by the cares and interests of her other children—sent a sharper pang, and weighed heavier on her ever sensitive feelings—just then more peculiarly alive to every impression—than she herself or any one else had any idea; for, with her usual patient resignation, she submitted to the cruel disappointment.

But when the hour of trial at length arrived, and in her pain and anguish, looking for pity and comfort, she found none (save from the same faithful servant before mentioned, on whose bosom her head rested! and no dearer or more familiar face met her fearful and beseeching eyes—no tenderer voice to soothe her, than that of the rigid, cold-blooded Lady Rachel—then the piteous moaning cry, “Mama,

Mama! my own darling, darling mama!" could not fail to have sent a sharp pang of self-reproachful misgivings to Mr. Beauchamp's heart, as it sounded in his ear in the adjoining apartment, where, in extreme agitation, he waited and listened the most part of the anxious time. Once, indeed, when Lady Rachel went to him to report how matters were proceeding, he said, with some regretful impatience and reproachful petulance—

"Would to God we had allowed Mrs. Cameron to come to her poor daughter! She must understand her better than any one else. This longing for her mother will be the death of her."

"This want of proper self-control and fortitude, rather, I should say, arising from the weak, ill-regulated mind, which her wretched mistaken education of enervating indulgence has engendered," was the sharp reply. "But fear not for your wife—*her* life is in no dan-

ger, I fancy; for the child's safety there is more peril to be apprehended."

However, all alarm on either score proved, happily, groundless. Long and bitter was the time of the young wife—tedious the hours ere the little daughter was born into the world. And Lady Rachel, perhaps put out of humour by her son's petulant remark, refused the offer of receiving into her arms her firstborn grandchild, exclaiming—

"A daughter! Another useless torment! More trouble than they are worth!"

Then had there followed for Lena a month of probation, which—after her slow recovery from the first state of extreme weakness to which her sufferings had reduced her—was, by the tiresome and injudicious strictness of discipline—the cold, depressing state and formality with which everything respecting the invalid was conducted—rendered a period of as much discomfort and weary languor, as it is in gene-

ral that of snug and quiet enjoyment and repose.

But the young mother could have endured it all without a complaining sigh. The fidgetty officiousness of her husband's unceasing jealous attendance, her sweet humble spirit would have thankfully received. Cheerful faces and pleasant, gentle talk, generally allowed in judicious measure to beguile the tedium of the lying-in chamber, under Lady Rachel's auspices were not to be expected; and Lena indeed had resigned herself, as a matter of course, to the most disagreeable and oppressive code of medical discipline that could possibly have existed. But the strong fresh spring of nature newly called up into her young heart—maternal love—could not so passively suffer itself to be curbed and thwarted. Lena *could* not so resignedly support the restraint and mistaken care, which kept her infant from her, but at the stated times, when expediency—or for the gratification of Mr. Beauchamp, rather

than for her own pleasure—the babe was brought in form by the attendants—mere slaves of Lady Rachel's will and regulations—and committed for a short space to her trembling, longing arms.

But even this was slight suffering to that which she endured, when she found her earnest pleading to be suffered to nurse her child, unheeded, and beheld the woman chosen for that office.

It had been one of her sweetest anticipations in contemplating her maternal prospects, to image her baby as she had often watched her mother's infants—their rosy cheeks against her gentle bosom, and their innocent eyes lifted as it were with silent joy and grateful confiding affection to the loving face bent over it with such tenderness. And of this delight—this most natural bliss—she was to be deprived. For even if Lady Rachel would have consented to agree as to her strength and capability to fulfil that office, Mr. Beauchamp de-

cidedly objected to her assuming it, and indeed had only abstained from placing a decided negative to any hopes she might have entertained, till the fear of any prejudicial effects from the agitation had passed.

“Not only,” he said, “would the practice spoil her figure, but it would absorb too much of her time and attention, interfering with that which was due to himself.”

Poor Lena! it was about the hardest trial with which she had yet to compete, when first her babe was hurried from her side, to hear its little cries soothed and silenced by the hireling appointed to usurp her place in that, her natural province; the more so, as she could not but be aware that hers was no case in which either her own or her child's well-doing was really concerned—as the doctor, a few days after the child's birth, when the subject was broached in her presence, had answered her beseeching wistful look by saying, “that he saw no reason—if it were at all desirable—

against Mrs. Beauchamp's continuing to nurse her baby for a few months;" though he had let the matter rest, when the frowning brow of Lady Rachel, who had just been laying down the law for the contrary decision, and the cold reply of Mr. Beauchamp, "that it was *not* in any way desirable," shewed to the obsequious physician, these votes to be decidedly *not* in favour of the proposition.

Poor Lena grieved still more in spirit that her own mother was not there to counteract by the influence of her experience and wisdom—which the fond daughter had yet to learn the possibility of being gainsaid, or disregarded—a decree so prejudicial to her happiness.

But as it was, she, poor girl! had to resign herself to her fate—having no more power to overcome the grievous fiat than has the young heifer to retain its firstling from the relentless hands which oftentimes divide it from her reach.

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Six weeks after Lena's confinement, the party returned to the Towers, and the renovated nurseries were thrown open to receive in due form the new Miss Beauchamp.

Lena smiled with tearful pleasure when her sisters-in-law, as the party alighted, pressed eagerly round the little stranger; even the timid Agnes breaking through all restraint of Miss Ricketts'—all fear of Lady Rachel's frowns—to honour and welcome the arrival of the little niece; forgetful of the obeisance due to the formidable mother, till called to recollection by the stern voice, demanding of the nurse if she deemed it a proper measure to keep the infant exposed to the cold draught of the hall? And then the girls fell back, allowing passage to the important nurse, who, under the direction of the groom of the chambers, was ushered a few steps further, till she found herself in the presence of the housekeeper, by whom escorted, she sailed off with her charge, followed by her auxiliary, to take possession of

her new dominion. Lena then beheld the forced courtesies of the daughters, and the scarcely extended finger, which, with a freezing glance of invidious disapproving scrutiny, the mother offered to each—the sole greeting between the reunited relations! How different from the home unions to which she had been accustomed, after the shortest separations, between children and parents, brothers and sisters—the glee, the ecstacy of these happy times! From her husband, too, with the exception of Agnes, with whom he did shake hands, a distant bow was the only salutation the two elder sisters received, having parted with them on cool terms, from some jealous cause with which Lena herself was connected. She embraced them both affectionately, and then would fain have had them accompany her to the nursery, anxious herself to see her baby in its new establishment, as well as to gratify her sisters-in-law by a more particular examination of her little niece.

But Mr. Beauchamp begged her not to think

of knocking herself up and disturbing the child by any such measure, but to retire immediately for quiet and repose; and Lady Rachel's significant enquiry, "Where, pray, is Miss Ricketts?" followed by the instant appearance of that lady, put the young ladies to the rout, and dispersed the whole party.

Lena, too, obeyed orders, and, reclining once more in her stately chamber, wondered—whilst a dark sensation of depression stole over her soul—whether she should ever be allowed to exercise the rights of a mother over her own child.

Time brought no satisfactory answer to this doubt. The hedge of constraints by which all her actions were constrained, extended even to her nursery intercourse. She seemed to feel almost an intruder when she ventured to enter the apartments except at the time of her daily stated visit.

The nurses, soon perceiving the little influence or authority allowed to the young mother,

yielded no more respect or consideration to her interference or suggestions, than they would have done to one of the aunts of their nursing. And when Lena did sometimes escape at irregular times to spend a few moments in the nursery, accompanied often by one of her sisters, especially Agnes—who seemed ever on the watch to creep in and catch for a passing moment a sight of the babe—a message would usually be brought from Mr. Beauchamp to recal her to his presence.

He could not well understand why the stated visits made and received by her infant should not suffice his young wife; and it was not surprising that so he should think, when he remembered that his own mother used to be satisfied by coldly touching the hand of her babies, instead of devouring them with warm kisses, and pressing—as did his fond young Lena—her babe with rapturous love to her bosom. And the jealous suspicion that either the pleasure of escaping from his society, or

that of enjoying a gossip with his sisters, might have something to do with it, rendered him still more tenacious and interfering on the subject.

All these vexatious annoyances at length began to do their work of mischief—Lena pined under this unnatural mode of existence—her spirits and even her health became visibly affected. Her strength scarcely renewed, threatened a relapse; so much so, that Mr. Beauchamp began to take alarm, and though of course shutting his eyes to the real cause, was seized with the fancy of inviting her parents to visit her—probably because he thought Mrs. Cameron, who must understand her daughter's constitution better than any one else, might set Lena to rights by her advice and experience; and partly was he influenced by his desire to have the visit over, which was, sometime or another, inevitable, and which had long been weighing heavily on his mind. Therefore, as we have seen, had the invitation

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been dispatched, and its immediate acceptance arrived.

General Cameron was to pay a flying visit to England that month; he therefore, accompanied by Mrs. Cameron and Annie—for the latter was not well, and required change—was to arrive at the Towers; and Lena, with nervous trembling delight, awaited the appointed period.

No happier, prouder being, is there, oftentimes, than the young wife, when she stands forth to receive and welcome, for the first time, her beloved parents to her married home—when she feels for the first time the gratification which the sight of her happiness will impart to their tender hearts—the power which she then possesses of repaying them in some degree for the happy home it has been their dear delight, from her infancy, to supply to their child, by providing all the comforts and enjoyments she could possibly devise to surround them, under her own roof.

And Lena—how was it with her on this similar occasion?

All pride and pleasure—from the sources we have just described—our readers by this time need scarcely be told were denied her. Her satisfaction must arise alone from the absorbing joy of feeling herself once more in her parents' arms.

Cruel, then, to have planted a thorn even in that one delight—to have caused that cloud of painful disquietude to hover on her brow and chase so soon the beam of ecstasy, which had glanced over it in the first transporting moments of the meeting!

CHAPTER V.

“ And I am splendid, but not free.

Ay—————now I see

That under greatest ostentation

Oft lurks the greatest slavery.”

Swedish Poet.

“ She smiles not in her new domain ;

But with an aching brow

Recalls those pleasant hours again—

She is not happy now.”

Carpenter.

THE Camerons had been received with all due respect by their son-in-law ; he conducted their impatient steps to Lena, who, half fainting with eager nervous longing to rush forth

to meet them, had been desired to await their arrival in her sitting-room.

Barring this stretch of formality, nothing interfered with the perfect contentment of the General and his lady during the first moments of their arrival.

Their feelings of joy on re-embracing their daughter were all-absorbing. To see her pale and delicate they had been prepared—that she was overcome more than elated by the joy of the meeting, was but according to her gentle nature; and when she was suffered, according to their eager desire, to lead them to her splendid nurseries, to shew them her fair sleeping babe, as it lay cradled on down and pillowed on satin; and then, by her husband's desire, she preceded the trio through her princess-like apartments, they might truly—if their experience could have rested there—have been satisfied that the lot of their daughter had indeed fallen on fair ground—that her's was a good heritage.

“ Yes, dear Annie, this is something like what I must have for you !” was Mrs. Cameron’s comment, as the dressing-room door shut upon them almost immediately afterwards, when they entered to make a hasty toilette.

Annie only smiled faintly and vaguely ; her heart was in no condition to appreciate the good wishes of her mother, even had she felt so satisfied that her sister’s lot was of so purely enviable a nature.

It is not the young heart, beating with the feelings of a first affection, which can be impressed by any such outward circumstances of life. The hidden jewel of her own breast must flash before her eyes—she must believe the master-spirit over all to be *love*—or the gilded palace and the humble cot will fail alike to awake one aspiring thought—one coveting desire.

Lady Rachel did not make herself visible till the dinner hour, when she joined the guests

in the drawing-room, the two Miss Beauchamps then also making their appearance.

There was in the General some peculiarity of demeanour or manner, which had ever seemed in a degree to influence the bearing of her Ladyship, and in her reception of the party there was nothing to complain.

The meal was certainly not one of the most lively; and the almost overstrained civility of their host would have tended more to curb, than set at ease any spirits less nobly independent than those of the General and his lady. They had come to see their daughter, and would have overlooked much more for the pleasure they had obtained. It was a delight indeed—one which made the father's eyes glisten fondly—to be gazing once more on his gentle child, as she sat—divided from him, alas!—by Lady Rachel, with whom she shared the head of her husband's table.

Lena spoke little. The expression as of some present disquiet often chased the earnest

smile of love, which, as her gaze fastened on her father, or roamed onward to her mother, or turned to the sister by her side, would seem for a moment to wrap her in a dream of joyful bewilderment.

But her parents saw only that she was the absorbing object of her husband's attention and anxiety. Mr. Beauchamp's eye was constantly turned upon his wife; the little she ate or drank was the chief subject which seemed to interest or concern him; whilst the eyes of Lady Rachel—which fell frowning and with a withering glance on her own daughters when they chanced or deigned to travel their way—bent even with gracious condescension upon her fair supporter.

And approvingly, if not kindly, did her words sound to the father's ears, when she spoke to him of his daughter. As for Annie—seated near her sister, with a Miss Beauchamp on her other side—pale and subdued by the recent sorrow, which her well-regulated mind,

with all its fortitude, had not yet been quite able to overcome—she must have been sufficiently changed from the merry little fearless chatterer of old, to satisfy even Lady Rachel. Nevertheless, she several times caught her Ladyship's sharp glance fixed upon her when she presumed to broach a sentence to her neighbour; and that, which in her natural state of spirits she would have heeded little, had now its intended effect, and destroyed the slight power she felt of exerting herself to rally from the depression with which, ever since she had entered the walls of the Towers, she felt her elastic spirits ominously weighed down.

She contented herself, therefore, with answering, with all the tenderness of her large saddened eyes, her beloved Lena's loving glances and gentle words.

They had not much unrestrained enjoyment of each other's society during the evening, but on retiring for the night, Mrs. Cameron put

her arm within Lena's, and said, turning with one of her resistless smiles to her son-in-law—

“I must run away with Lena for a little chat ere we go to bed;” and Mr. Beauchamp, taking out his watch, said, looking at his wife—

“It is half-past ten, Lena. A quarter of an hour at the utmost: no more, I beg.”

Ere the first excitement of finding themselves for the first time left to the uninterrupted, unrestrained enjoyment of the reunion had subsided, and their intercourse began to assume a more collected and enjoyable form—the many points of mutual interest started—home information required, and given! there was a knock at the door—Lena's maid, sent from Mr. Beauchamp, to say, that the quarter of an hour was exceeded, and he hoped Mrs. Beauchamp would not sit up any longer.

“A very obedient wife indeed!” said the General, as Lena started up as eagerly as

Cinderella at the stroke of the midnight chime.

“ I call this very hard,” said Mrs. Cameron, as she received the parting embrace of her daughter; “ but perhaps Mr. Beauchamp is quite right. You are not strong enough for the late hours for which I feel inclined to-night; and that naughty Annie looks tired to death, but will not go to bed till you do. As Mr. Beauchamp is so kind as to let us come to see you, we must not make you ill.”

Poor Lena! she went to bed, and awoke the next morning with a weight upon her mind which poisoned the enjoyment of an event she had anticipated as one of unmixed bliss. What was its cause? No more nor less than that a task had been imposed on the daughter, revolting every feeling of her sensitive and affectionate heart, and which on the morrow must be accomplished.

It was not to be her fate to see her parents depart, loaded with earnest entreaties to press

them to remain—no, on the contrary, she was to take the earliest opportunity of placing limits to their sojourn under her roof.

Such a case may appear unnatural and overstrained—it is, however, but too true—one instance amongst others of covert tyranny and oppression, or whatever name may be given to springs of action, which few can understand, not unparalleled in real life. For the relief of those tender hearts which may bleed in sympathy for the poor young wife's perplexity on the occasion, we will without delay bring her through the performance of her reluctant task.

She was with her mother and sister alone, the following morning, in her private sitting-room, where, in the absence of her husband, she was allowed to introduce them, though the grand saloon was the commonly understood place of entertainment for company. Just as the utter impossibility, yet the necessity of fulfilling the dreaded command began to press so heavily upon her, that Mrs.

Cameron could not fail to be more strongly impressed with *the something* which had before struck her as constrained and ill at ease in her daughter's demeanour, the mother said—

“Lena, I must write a few lines to the Duchess; she wishes to know when we are to be in London. She has some kind plan to propose concerning Annie, though not to give her a London season, I fear, for she is to be abroad all the summer; but perhaps it will be as well, and next spring she has promised to introduce her.”

“Would you like to go abroad, dear Annie?” Lena asked.

Poor Annie was not just then in a state of feeling in which the power of liking anything very much is possible; though at the same time it renders one very submissive to the likings of others on our account. And so she smiled a pensive assent.

“And when shall I say, dear Lena, that we shall be in London?” Mrs. Cameron continued.

“Your father is obliged to leave you on Saturday, but Annie and I can stay as many days as is agreeable to you.”

Lena was sitting opposite to her mother, and she turned so deadly pale, as she listened to this address, and sat so strangely and distressingly silent when it was completed, that Mrs. Cameron was quite alarmed, and did not know what to think—it not suggesting itself to her imagination at first, that her words had so affected her daughter. But she saw her at length melt into tears, as she sobbed forth: “Mama, Mr. Beauchamp wishes me to tell you—but it makes me so unhappy—that he—Lady Rachel—is very sorry—but—but——”

“An earlier day will be more convenient for our departure perhaps?” Mrs. Cameron rejoined; her quick perception saved poor Lena from being the first to speak the cruel words.

The daughter’s silence gave assent to her mother’s conjecture, and whatever offence and

surprise Mrs. Cameron might have experienced, she answered, calmly and soothingly—

“Perhaps, dearest, it will be more expedient that we should accompany your father on Friday; it is much the best plan—much more agreeable to be informed—in short, not to be treated with ceremony—as strangers—so pray do not distress yourself, darling love. Perhaps Friday will be the best day, and it will be quite convenient for us.”

“No, Saturday—that was the day Mr. Beauchamp said!” poor Lena exclaimed, beseechingly, her face now becoming scarlet with distress and shame, which her mother’s considerate dissimulation of any demonstration of offence or surprise did little to allay. And Mrs. Cameron answered—

“Mr. Beauchamp is very kind—Saturday then it shall be; I dare say it will suit the General;” and an irrepressible tinge of irony and bitterness was in the tone. Four whole days for parents who had crossed the seas for

the ostensible purpose of seeing their child, (for they had only arrived on the Monday) was indeed a generous and hospitable extent to be invited to prolong their visit.

Whatever feelings were excited in the parents by this startling conversation—however fearfully alive it might render them to mark any symptom in their child's circumstances which pierced their hearts with misgivings and anxiety—the more disquieting, perhaps, from there being nothing tangible which met the eye that they could grasp, of which to complain—they determined not only to spare the feelings of their daughter by any show of hurt or offence on their part, but also, for her sake, to meet the discourteous conduct of her husband or mother-in-law—in whichever it might have originated—in a way which might be likely to operate in their favour with respect to future occasions.

So the visit continued with every outward

show of smoothness, and as much cheerfulness as could possibly be expected.

Mr. Beauchamp, in consideration perhaps of the shortness of its duration, left his wife more at liberty than he had done ever since her marriage, and Lady Rachel's almost entire withdrawal from their company—seldom joining the party till dinner—was too agreeable, not to be willingly accounted in the light of good taste and consideration—rather than rudeness.

The Miss Beauchamps, though evidently restricted from free intercourse with the party, gladly stole every opportunity of passing a few minutes in the society of their pleasant guests entering with great zest into the cheerful converse of Mrs. Cameron, whom they looked upon as a miracle of beauty and kindness. And much they enjoyed a good-natured jest with the General, who might have been an angel in man's disguise, such was the admiring reverence with which they looked upon his fine benevolent countenance.

With what a peculiar expression of interest did that young drooping girl, Agnes, in particular, dart her furtive glances, restless, timid, as a hunted roe's, upon Gerald's father and mother, whenever they chanced to cross her path, or she ventured to steal into their presence for a few moments.

How their kindly words and speeches would cause her cheeks,

“Paler, thinner, than should be for one so young—”

to glow with sudden light—her bosom to heave as if bursting with emotion, the peculiarity of which did not quite escape the perception of General and Mrs. Cameron, and increased the interest and kind pity which the poor oppressed girl originally excited in their minds. They had heard from Lena, that poor Agnes was under severer restraint than ever, and generally in disgrace. Miss Ricketts, she said (the awful name of Lady Rachel, Lena pared not take in vain) found her temper be-

come irritable and insubordinate—sometimes extending to almost hysterical violence.

“And no wonder, teased and tormented as she is, poor girl!—they will drive her mad at last,” exclaimed the General with indignation; for if there was anything that put him into a regular passion, it was the idea of tyranny—nay, indeed, even the slightest severity exercised over the young.

But for Lena’s sake he restrained himself from the anathemas about to be poured forth against the tyrant mother, and her myrmidons, and only added—

“I wish they would give the girl to us, we would soon set her to rights.”

“Yes, with spoiling and petting,” Annie archly remarked, at the same time winding her arms with caressing fondness round her father’s neck; whilst Lena smiled faintly and sadly as she earnestly regarded them.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Take the pen and tell my love,
How to earth, and heaven above ;

* * * *

I have watch'd, and wept and pray'd—

* * * *

Him on surge, or him on steed,
Still to spare, and still to speed !”

Croly.

THAT day Lena was to be allowed the privilege of driving her mother in her pony phaeton, closely escorted by the General and Mr. Beauchamp on horseback. Lady Rachel was also to take her accustomed drive with her two daughters.

Annie being thus left out of the arrangement, her Ladyship condescended to say at luncheon that Miss Cameron might form the third victim in her equipage. But Mrs. Cameron came to the rescue of Annie's dismayed countenance. She thanked her Ladyship for her gracious offer, but mentioned her wish that her daughter should remain at home to finish a letter to her brother at Gibraltar.

"And perhaps," she continued, "your Ladyship would be so kind as to indulge her with half an hour of Miss Agnes Beauchamp's company during our absence?"

Lady Rachel's countenance immediately darkened into its severest austerity, and she answered—

"Under the eye of Miss Ricketts, I shall have no objection."

The proposition was not taken up, for Mrs. Cameron felt quite out of patience, aware that under such auspices it would not benefit poor

Agnes, for whose sake she had asked the favour.

And Annie was left alone in her mother's dressing-room to write her letter, intending at its conclusion to go to the nursery to see if she could manage to gain possession of the baby for a short time.

The poor dear baby ! for whose society they were always imploring until they became aware how little power the mother possessed of regulating its movements or of changing the tenor of the arrangements laid out in so arbitrary a manner for its disposal. Many were the broad hints and sidelong glances, by which Annie had, on the occasion, of the infant's stated visits to the drawing-room, solicited the dismissal of the "horrid nurse," as she would call the formidable fat fine lady, who would stand all the time watching their movements, and looking as if she considered it a liberty, when even its own mother ventured to press the little creature in her arms and cover it with kisses. But Annie was frustrated in her pur-

posed visit, for ere she had quite completed the letter, in which, with her natural, fresh impulse of character, she had not scrupled to speak her mind freely to her like-minded brother on all she saw around her—a hasty knock, and still hastier opening of the door, startled her. Agnes stole in, and closed the door after her—listened—and then drew the bolt.

Annie, having watched these manœuvres anxiously, greeted her with a smile of welcome, saying,

“Well, dear Agnes, you have come, after all, without Miss Ricketts.”

“Yes!” Agnes answered, panting; “and I do not think they will hunt me on this ground; but if they do come, say I am not here, and they will be obliged to take you at your word. Oh! I am not afraid,” she added, seeing Annie did not very readily assent to this last requirement, and deeming the hesitation was in consideration of herself. “I have accustomed

them to such games of hide-and-seek lately, and have nerved myself to the consequences."

"Well, sit down, and I will first finish my letter for the post, and then we can have a little chat," said Annie.

Agnes obeyed. She watched the nimble little fingers of her companion for some time in silence, and then said suddenly, as she saw by the signature that the letter was finished—

"Who have you been writing to?"

"Gerald," quickly and carelessly answered Annie. She did not look up—she did not at that moment remember the Beechy-shrubbery passages between the parties, which might have accounted in some degree, perhaps, for the change of countenance she would have witnessed, had she beheld the effect of her answer.

"Gerald, dear Gerald, who is in Gibraltar!" Annie continued in the same manner, after a slight pause, during which she had added some

little postscript which had occurred to her—
“shall I give him any message from you?”

Agnes at these words rose abruptly, and stood, to Annie’s surprise, crimson and trembling as with conflicting eagerness and irresolution; speechless—yet as if a thousand tongues struggled within her breast to say unutterable things.

Annie laughed. She knew no deeper cause than the shrubbery walk, which now began to recur, to excite her sympathy or consideration, and she said, archly—

“Well, shall I say, ‘Agnes hopes, some day, to have another schoolroom talk, and shrubbery walk with you?’”

“No,” said Agnes, the light estimate which Annie’s words and manner implied of the mighty secret of her own breast, piquing her girlish vanity: “no, do not say that; let me;” and with proud, but hurried, nervous eagerness, she seized the pen, and after a moment’s thought traced at the bottom of Annie’s page, with trembling hands, the hasty scrawl—

“Gerald! do you remember Agnes? SHE has not forgotten you.” Then throwing down the pen, she stood with breathless emotion, so that Annie would have imagined she had written something most strange and startling, rather than those few seemingly simple words!

Agnes continued contemplating her performance, till Annie, still smiling with provoking unconsciousness, drew the letter away to fold and seal it, and Agnes again seated herself; but after a moment's pause, with a countenance of important meditation, she at length broke silence:

“Annie Cameron, you are about my age, I think?”

“Yes, seventeen,” Annie replied.

“And you have been already in society, and I am in worse than Egyptian bondage; but—but——” She again paused, checking the words which seemed about to declare with elated triumph some mighty relief to be in prospect.

“You must be very happy?” she continued,

dropping her eyes, and voice to its usual piteous dejection.

Annie sighed.

“ Frank ! poor dear Frank ! ” she thought.

“ No ! not very happy ! that sigh expressed. You are not so merry, certainly,” Agnes proceeded, “ as you were at Beechy. Oh that happy, delicious time ! Then my sisters tell me you have had a love affair,” Agnes added, stealing a glance at her companion from her downcast eyes. Poor Annie writhed beneath this abrupt careless statement, and did not answer as she bent over the seal of her letter. Again Agnes resumed—her own so differently circumstanced “ love affair ” alone filling her mind—

“ And why did you not marry if you were in love ? I thought *you* could do anything you liked.”

“ Not that,” Annie murmured, turning away her head, as if she would avoid the subject.

“ No ! why not ? ” said Agnes.

"Because my parents disliked the idea of it," Annie quickly and somewhat impatiently replied, rising.

"Then why?" persisted her persevering tormentor, looking away, and speaking with affected carelessness—"why did you not run away with your lover?"

Annie turned her beautiful eyes with an astonished gaze full upon her companion.

"Run away!" she exclaimed; "what an idea! Do you really mean it?"

"Yes: did you never hear of people running away?" Agnes answered, looking somewhat abashed.

"Yes, I have *heard* of such a thing, certainly, but never dreamed of following such an example," Annie continued, with careless scorn.

"But if your lover implored you—if there were no other possible way of marrying?"

"No, I would NOT!" was the decided reply.

“Why not?” asked Agnes. “Do you think it wrong?”

“Yes, most certainly. I should be ashamed to look my father and my mother in the face again, after having acted so ungrateful, so undutiful a part. Little love, little gratitude would it be shewing them for all their affection and indulgence, if on the first sacrifice I was called upon to make for their sake, I failed in being able to support it. Any happiness I might gain by the act of disobedience, would fail, I think, to reconcile me to myself. No! I should indeed be ashamed, and hate myself ever after, to deceive and distress my darling parents, from whom I never had a secret. How, Agnes, could such a thought ever enter your imagination?”

Agnes looked at Annie's tearful countenance in silence, but her words found little sympathy in her heart. They could touch no similar chord of feeling in her breast. What had she

to do with parental love and gratitude—she who *hated* her mother?

So she continued, after a pause, with some hesitation—

“Do you never have a secret from your mother—do you tell her everything?”

“Yes! everything that in the least concerns her or me.”

“But if other people confide a secret to you—if I, for example, were to ask you to keep a secret for me from everybody in the world?”

“I should beg you to keep it to yourself,” Annie laughingly answered; “for it would be a most intolerable burden, and would be sure to pop out some day unawares.”

“I am very sorry,” Agnes replied gravely, “for I have a very great secret, which no one knows but my—oh, I forget; I had better not say—but some day you may hear all, and be very much surprised, as well as many others.”

Though Annie thus deprived herself of this

mysterious communication—one which truly she had little idea would prove of such a peculiar and interesting nature to her—she did not depart from the Towers without being let into some lighter “secrets of the prison-house.”

CHAPTER VII.

“Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity ;
Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles.”

Milton's L'Allegro.

“ I have dreamt thou wert
A captive in thy hopelessness ;
————— I can see thee wasting,
Sick for thy native air.”

L. E. L.

ONE night Annie reluctantly suffered herself, according to a promise before secretly exacted, to be laid hands upon by the two elder girls, on the party separating for the night, and she

led away, up flights of stairs and curiously-winding passages, to the range of rooms, one compartment of which was appropriated to the governesses and young ladies. There were small cell-like dormitories for each, and a large apartment — the schoolroom — that memorable chamber, the scene of many a groan and tone, even from the period when the now all-powerful representative of the house of Beauchamp, had been committed by his lady mother to the hands of the unfortunate individual hired for the purpose of vanquishing the mulish obstinacy, of which very early in life the heir had evinced no slight symptoms. Even from that period had it continued a sort of Bluebeard chamber, to the present day, when tears and groans had lately yielded to the deeper manifestations of the last victim it was destined to enclose.

And then there was a still larger room, carpetless, and till of late nearly unfurnished. The play-room it had been denominated, and

there in truth the three Master Beauchamps had often made its walls resound with fun and frolic. Boys are not easily robbed of these their natural attributes. From the time, however, that the youngest son went to school, of a sorry play had that chamber been the scene; no livelier pastime being countenanced by Miss Ricketts than the drilling and swinging and gymnastic contortions with which the Miss Beauchamps were suffered to amuse themselves—when debarred by weather from outdoor exercise—to relieve their stiffened limbs and stupified heads.

Alfred Beauchamp—a high-spirited but excitable youth—had, in a fit of rage, kindled by his mother's harsh treatment, gone to sea, and never since had beheld her, or spoken to his eldest brother, who had espoused Lady Rachel Beauchamp's cause.

Of late days, the aspect of the play-room again had changed. It was monopolized as the sitting-room of the two enfranchised vic-

tims. There they now most freely unrelaxed, both in body and mind, from the shackles of their tyrant mother's society. There, now, no grim-visaged governesses dared intrude. There they breakfasted—not on the school-room diet of milk and water, soured by Miss Ricketts' countenance, as supposed by Lady Rachel—but on the good things with which their bribed caterer, the still-room maid, supplied them.

There also they supped and revelled snugly till midnight over the fireside, improving their minds by novels obtained also through the means of the convenient back stairs and still more convenient ally, from the circulating library of a neighbouring small town.

Agnes was usually called from her bed to partake of these indulgences, Miss Ricketts in the meantime having retired to rest ; and when once finally tucked up for the night, poor creature ! her sense of responsibility was willingly laid beneath her pillow. She did not, or would not, hear any sound which it was

her province to reprobate and report—even to the clattering of knives and forks she was deaf.

It was to the play-room, then, that the wondering Annie was now introduced. A good fire lighted the large, low apartment, and a table with a cloth stood prepared. She was made to seat herself, whilst Miss Beauchamp bustled about, in preparation for the entertainment intended to do honour to her company.

There was whispering, and scuffling, and giggling going on outside the door. At length, two servants made their appearance—the afore-said still-room maid, and a footman, who, bearing in triumph a large dish of oysters, was greeted, to Annie's amazement and confusion, by Amelia, by the familiar appellation of—

“ Oh, you dear, delightful William—you clever creature !”

And Jane, the still-room maid, when she had added the other delicacies to the repast, received a playful hug from the young lady.

“ Oh, we are quite shocking Annie Cameron!” exclaimed Rachel, on the servants’ leaving the room, as she marked Annie’s countenance, expressive of her startled dismay, at witnessing such familiarities.

“ Are we indeed?” said Amelia. “ Oh, I assure you, William and Jane are the best friends we possess. Many’s the fun and good things we owe to them; without their help we must have starved on dullness and scanty fare. You don’t suppose we can exist upon what we eat down stairs—Lady Rachel watching every mouthful we swallow at dinner—and then those wafer slices of bread and butter at tea! No! that is not at all in our line!”

“ Poorly off for friends, you see, Annie!” Rachel interposed, apologetically; “ so we are obliged to make them when we can, and not be too nice.”

“ No, indeed! for want of company, welcome trumpery,” chimed in Amelia, as she spread the bread and butter with great zest;

“and who do you think we had to sup with us the other night, when old Ricketts was ill?”

“Amelia, go and call up Agnes!” Rachel exclaimed, looking rather ashamed.

“Oh, no; do let me first tell her. It was such capital fun. Why, it was young Hobson, the apothecary. He was sent for late, to see Ricketts. Oh, he is quite a respectable young man, and rather good-looking!”

Rachel looked shocked and ashamed, and ran to tell Agnes she might come in without danger, as William would not return; and Agnes rose from her bed, and in her *robe de chambre* entered, rubbing her eyes, and looking cross and sleepy.

“Oh, come along, Mrs. G. C.,” said Amelia, forgetful, in her elation, of Annie’s presence, “and *chaperone* us; and don’t give yourself airs, for we have a visiter.”

The last injunction may shew, that Agnes’ superior prospects had, among many other effects, led to no little assumption and pre-

sumption, in the young girl's unsettled and inflated mind. But now she looked shocked and alarmed at Amelia's unwary manner of address, and glanced suspiciously at Annie, on whose ears, however, the initials fell harmlessly.

Nothing now, after what she had heard or seen, could particularly astonish her afresh—so bewildering was it all to her unaccustomed senses, and as repulsive to her delicately nurtured taste, as were the well vinegared and peppered oysters pressed upon her by Amelia.

“What, not like oysters?” both the elder sisters exclaimed in amaze, as their guest begged to be allowed, if she must eat, to choose some of the more delicate viands spread before her.

“Not much!” she answered, laughing. “At least, I never eat such things. Papa and my brothers (and some one else, she thought) have some odd ideas about what ladies ought and ought not to eat, and I think oysters are one

of their horrors;" and with increased distaste her eye fell upon the luscious morsels which were quickly and dexterously disappearing down the fair throats of the highborn damsels.

"I cannot bear them either," Agnes exclaimed, quickly pushing away the dainty "fat one," as Dickens's "Charlotte" says, proffered on the extremity of Amelia's fork.

"Well, if I *have* liked them," she said, with pettish annoyance, as both her sisters vehemently exclaimed against her assertion, declaring that till this night she had partaken of them with as great a relish as either of them, "I shall never like them again. They really always disgust me," Agnes persisted.

The others laughed long and loud.

"Has Lena ever seen all this?" Annie at length enquired, beginning to recover from her first astonishment, and to be able to enter, with her quick sense of the ridiculous, into

the ludicrous originality of the scene into which she found herself introduced as a party.

“Your sister!” Rachel answered. “Poor dear creature—oh no! I wish we could get her amongst us to give her a little fun now and then, though I don’t think our gambols would quite suit her, perhaps; she’s too delicate a thing to be much up to these sort of doings. She likes our society, though, when she is allowed to have it, which is not very often.”

“And why not?” Annie asked, with anxious interest.

“Why?” Rachel answered, with a shrug; “what can be replied to the question, except why is it Lady Rachel’s pleasure to hunt and worry her daughters—to the death, I believe, if she could? And why is it my brother’s pleasure and plan to tease and torment his poor wife in his way—a very different way, certainly—but just as killing in the end, I should imagine, if human beings were as apt to be

killed as birds and beasts. Yes!" continued the young girl, "I often think Lady Rachel must be thinking in her heart, when she looks at us, as is said in the old ballad, only changing the number of the victims, and from no such kind motive:—

"I wish my daughters were seven hares,
Running along yon lily lea,
And I myself a gude greyhound,
To worry them and make them dee."

"Oh, how like our mother, indeed!" murmured Agnes, lifting up her pale face, as if to an oracle; "and I have often wished, I am sure, that I was one of the poor hares, and might die—at least——till——"

"And Lionel," Rachel continued, without noticing the interruption, "when I see him with Lena, it always reminds me of days of yore, when he was a great boy, and I a very little girl—but I remember it perfectly. He had a little white doe, which he had taken from its mother, for his particular pet. How he

teased the poor little creature with trying to make it fond of him, and how angry he was when he found us little girls, or any one else, fondling or feeding it! I remember his beating it with a stick one day, though he was never naturally cruel, because it followed me for a piece of bread I held to it, when *he* called it to come to him. He tethered it up, poor little creature, entirely in a paddock, where we used to look at it through the railings. Lionel kept the key. Such piteous glances the poor gentle animal would cast at us! At last the white doe pined away—and died. She could not bear the confinement. Lionel was very miserable, and did not speak for days, but it was all his own fault.”

If there be but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, how soon can we step from the ridiculous to the pathetic!

The milk-white doe turned Annie’s laughing glance upon the oysters and their accompaniments, into one of pained distress.

“She pined away, and died at last!” How often did those words haunt her in after days, when her dear sister’s sad sweet face rose to her remembrance; for Lena and the white doe seemed, by Rachel Beauchamp’s fanciful simile, to have become amalgamated in her imagination.

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“Dear Mama,” said Annie, with anxious earnestness to her mother, the day before their departure, “do you think poor Lena is happy?”

It was a painful question, but Mrs. Cameron answered—

“I hope so indeed, Annie. She has never said anything to lead me to imagine the contrary. She has every circumstance around her to make her happy—I mean, every outward luxury and comfort. Mr. Beauchamp is certainly rather an odd man, but he seems very fond of Lena; and I hope she loves him.”

Annie sighed, little satisfied. "Was the petted pampered white doe happy, in its luxurious prison?"

"Oh, Mama," she exclaimed, "Lena would have been much happier at home with us, I think. How wistfully she does look at you and Papa, as if she could not love any one in the world so well, except indeed her dear little baby! Oh, Mama, why did she marry Mr. Beauchamp?"

Mrs. Cameron turned away, writhing from the pangs of her wounded conscience.

"Annie, I beseech you—do not put such cruel ideas into my head; and pray be silent on this subject to your father—it would make him wretched: he is already sufficiently tenacious and fidgetty about your sister. Lena, perhaps, has not yet quite become accustomed to her new estate. The first year or two are seldom the happiest of a young wife's life. The first fervour of her husband's *exigeant* fondness will soon begin to exhaust itself, and

he will leave her more at liberty to enjoy herself with our society."

"But if she is never to be allowed any opportunity of doing so," Annie continued; "if she is to be ordered, poor darling! to tell us we are expected to stay but four days on our first visit after her marriage, what will it be henceforth? Time will not, I suspect, increase Mr. Beauchamp's and Lady Rachel's love for us. Indeed, I now believe, were it not for Papa, who keeps them both in awe, they would not be very civil to either you or me, Mama. Lady Rachel looks as if she would fain box my ears whenever she looks at me. And you, dear Mama!—I cannot *endure* Mr. Beauchamp's manner towards you—such utter disregard of your opinions and suggestions concerning Lena and her child. He looks as if he thought is quite a liberty when you speak to her, or she to you. Oh, Mama," Annie added, in a low tone of gentle reproach, "how different Frank would have been—how he would have loved

~ you—how he would have welcomed you, and all belonging to me! And though our home might have been less grand and rich, I am sure it would have suited your affectionate heart far better. There you would have found at least, warmth, liberty, and gaiety, instead of this cold dulness and constraint. But forgive me, dear mother; I promised not to speak to you again about that,” poor Annie added with a sigh, “and it is all over now!”

CHAPTER VIII.

“Brothers in blood and nurture too,
Aliens in heart too oft do prove ;
One lose, the other keep Heaven’s clue—
One dwell in wrath, and one in love.”

Keble.

LENA stood with her husband beneath the portico, to watch her parents’ departure. The nurse and baby were there also. Mr. Beauchamp took the child and placed it in the young mother’s arms—to divert, no doubt, the burst of grief he saw struggling in her heaving breast, and pale, piteous face—and the little *ruse* was not unsuccessful.

It had the effect of bringing a faint glow and

tearful smile to the young mother's face, as she lifted her little darling to the last lingering gaze of her parents and sister. It gave a happier impress also to those, who with such painful feelings at their hearts left the loved one behind. The action appeared amiable and graceful on the husband's part, and the remembrance of that glowing smile caused their tears to flow with less bitterness, and to render less gloomy their journeying thoughts.

As if that smile were to rest on poor Lena's lips for ever !

The baby was soon gravely and formally removed from her arms; and, as at the *finale* of some *tableau-vivant*, Lena was led back into her awful home—her heart yearningly following those retreating chariot wheels; her husband rejoicing at the sound, which assured him that the patient sad one by his side was all his own again, and firmly resolving in his inward mind that many should be the days ere importunate relations again interfered with

his indubitable privileges. Arrangements were shortly afterwards entered upon for the christening of the infant daughter—an event to which a few of its highborn paternal relatives were invited.

The babe received the name of “Rachel Laura,” the last appellation grudgingly acceded to, as a faint compensation to the poor young mother for the banishment of all she loved from a ceremony so interesting and sacred to her feelings.

Mrs. Cameron was informed that she was honoured by being joint-godmother with Lady Rachel, some grandee cousin standing proxy for her; this compliment being considered perfectly adequate to wipe off any idea of slight or disrespect the Cameron family might have implied, by not having been invited to the ceremony.

The clerical Mr. Beauchamp performed the baptismal service, and the event was not rendered the more joyous, from the fact, that the

son entered and left the house without having been spoken to by his mother. Never since Lady Rachel had parted in wrath from him after the wedding, had she seen or held any communication with Ralph Beauchamp; and when it had been his brother's determination that he should be invited to officiate at the christening, she had strongly opposed the measure.

But having his own particular reasons and desires on the subject, Mr. Beauchamp persisted in following his own devices, caring little whether or not his lady mother carried out her threat of not speaking to her offending son during his visit. He was too well accustomed to that sort of domestic amiability—indeed too much inclined to it himself—to be greatly affected by a proceeding of the like nature.

So the reverend Ralph had been invited, and had accepted the invitation, principally for two very laudable reasons of his own. The one, to make peace with his mother, as far as that were

possible ; another, to see his sisters, for whom he felt no little interest and compassion. As for his brother—although he was glad to christen his child and make further acquaintance with the lovely interesting creature, to whom he had united him—there was little in common between the excellent clergyman and Lionel Beauchamp ; and though they had hitherto kept on good terms, seldom for his own pleasure did the clergyman Ralph visit at the Towers ; beside the little love and favour he had ever received from his mother, it was most painful to his feelings to remember, that one brother was an outcast from the home of his family, and also to witness the tyranny which rendered his young sisters' life, a state of slavery and oppression.

Lady Rachel had, ever from his boyhood, felt the check his superiority and amiable disposition placed upon her harshness—nay, cruelty—and did not love him the better for it.

Ralph Beauchamp found a new source of sympathy on now visiting the Towers.

He had often wondered how his brother conducted himself as a husband—how they “got on together,” as they call it in the household of the Towers.

He came and saw—and pity and anxiety were strongly awakened in his kind and sensible heart, by the case that insight presented to his view.

“Our sister-in-law is a sweet, beautiful creature,” he said to Rachel and Amelia; “but is she happy?”

“Can that be possible, poor soul, with such a husband?” was the sisterly reply. And then followed a detail which showed how even his union with the amiable, gentle Lena—a position which ought rather to have softened and reformed his nature—had rather fanned into action the selfish, jealous inclinations of which his brother’s character had ever shown symptoms.

“ And you, my dear girls, cannot bear patiently the trials of Lionel’s temper—trials from which a year or two may—*must*, indeed—deliver you, if you really determine, as you say, to seek the protection which circumstances justify your doing—yet that poor sweet patient creature has a long life before her of trial and suffering, such as, by your description, Lionel causes her to endure.”

“ A long life !” Rachel answered, with a melancholy countenance ; “ not a very long life, I should fear—or rather should hope, poor delicate thing ! He will kill her, Ralph, if he go on as he has begun. She is too angelic for a world such as ours at home.”

“ But the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever,” answered the brother. “ Ah, Rachel, it is such gentle souls who shall live to all eternity !”

“ Whose cross they take so calm,
Shall prove in Heaven a martyr’s palm.”

“It was really quite a relief,” rejoined the unspiritual Amelia, “to see her once, more nearly approaching to a passion than I believe she ever before felt inclined to exhibit. It was the night of her parents’ cavalier dismissal from their four days’ visit. We were present—Lady Rachel and all. Lionel teased and tormented her to death about looking melancholy; till she said, with some spirit, that she could not help it, for she felt wretched. ‘And why?’ was asked by the considerate husband. Lena burst into tears, and said, ‘Because her father and mother had left her, and it seemed that their stay had been so very short.’ Lionel was struck dumb at first, I believe, by the presumption of such a declaration; but Lady Rachel looked at him, as much as to say,

“‘You see what you have brought upon yourself; pray set her down properly, or allow me to do so for you;’ and I dare say would have been charmed to see him box her ears.

But Lionel's hits are of a different kind. He only said, very gently, to all appearance—

“ ‘ I am sorry, Lena, to see this exhibition of temper. The visits of your relations must be still shorter, if such be the consequence of them.’

“ ‘ Ah no, Lionel!’ she said, weeping bitterly, ‘ not unless you wish to see me die; for I cannot, *cannot* live quite without them!’

“ He then told her he was sorry to witness petulance, of which he had not believed her capable; and then she was as frightened and penitent as if she had really behaved ill.”

It was through similar conversations that Ralph Beauchamp received these statements; and the displeasure of Lady Rachel was increased towards him by his evident leaning towards his persecuted sisters. In this feeling the elder brother was not wholly without participation.

Their mutual displeasure would have been still more highly excited, had they known that

the chief subject of consultation between them was, the determination of the two elder sisters to leave the tyrannical roof which had sheltered them, immediately that the majority of Amelia made such a plan feasible. Rachel had already reached the desired age of one-and-twenty. But Agnes—what was to become of her? Ralph enquired. Was she to be forsaken?

The sisters looked mysterious, but seemed unaccountably indifferent on that point. As for his youngest sister—in the restricted private intercourse he was suffered to have with her during his visit, he was grieved and disappointed to behold the effects which, as he thought, the injudicious galling treatment was working upon her temper and demeanour—the reckless, flighty, suspicious manner with which even his kind endeavours to draw her into confidence, or give her gentle remonstrance and advice, were received. He feared the nature of the once gentle, timid girl, had

been hopelessly soured and hardened, fully justifying the reports which had reached his ears of the change in her disposition.

It was repugnant to his every feeling of propriety and humanity, the manner in which this change was treated—the further tightening of her galling chain—the frigid tyranny with which she was dealt with. But what could he do? His mother refused even to listen to him on the subject; and his brother—jealous of his influence over the other sisters, with whom, as the joint guardian with their mother, he brooked no intermeddling—declined interceding in the matter.

“My dear Ralph,” he at length said, becoming weary and impatient of his brother’s persevering earnestness on the subject, yet willing to keep up an outward show of courtesy towards the brother, whose mild excellency, shining so benignantly amongst the dark spirits surrounding him, even he could not but in some degree respect “you must be aware that you have

no *natural* right to interfere between a mother and her daughter, and no *legal* claim to do so between a ward and her guardians: therefore I advise you to leave alone this fruitless and unnecessary case. Why," he continued, with a self-satisfied sneer, "you will wish next, perhaps, to meddle between me and my wife."

Ralph Beauchamp was silent for a moment or two, as if he certainly hesitated whether or not he ought to speak that which hovered on his lips; but soon he said, firmly, but mildly—

"You speak truly there, Lionel; for whereas I have the warrant of God's word, which all—and especially one of his appointed ministers—are bound to declare to those who seem forgetful of its injunctions—whilst I have the sacred right to sound in my mother's ears, 'Parents, provoke not your children to wrath,' I have also words for you, brother, on the subject you mention. I might perchance tell you, that the husband is to 'love and cherish his wife.'"

"And who would dare to presume—who

would be so absurd as to assume that to be necessary in my case?" Mr. Beauchamp interrupted, his eyes gleaming with angry surprise upon his brother. "I think, indeed, that might be the very last injunction to be addressed to me."

"Stop, Lionel: the injunction to which I allude stands thus written—'Love your wife as yourself;' and another—'Be not bitter against her.' 'Let those who are strong, bear with the infirmities of the weak, and *not please themselves.*' Now, there may be conduct which we may deceive ourselves by deeming *love* for *another*, when *love of self* shews itself alone as its foundation, all-predominant and absorbing—conduct which, under the comfortable pretext of excess of care and fond devotion, may turn a young creature's existence into one bitter trial and constant sacrifice. Lionel, forgive me—forgive what you may truly deem intrusive interference—but I cannot refrain. Your

wife is such a sweet, interesting being—so touchingly patient and submissive——”

“Enough!” was the haughty interruption, Mr. Beauchamp rising from his seat. “This is indeed intrusive—impertinent interference, which I cannot suffer.”

And the brothers were from that moment *two* for life.

“*A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong tower!*”

CHAPTER IX.

“ Ay—we are betrothed :

Nay, more, our marriage hour,

With all the cunning manner of our flight,

Determined of—————

—————and all the means

Plotted and 'greed on, for my happiness.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

It would be more consistent with the dramatic principle generally adopted for the construction of works of this nature, were we to turn to other scenes and personages than those which have of late principally engaged our attention.

But the order of our story forbids this me-

thod in the present instance, and obliges us to bring our readers once more in sight of the frowning turrets of the Towers.

Two stage-coaches passing nearly at the same time through the straggling village, not far from the Lodge-gate, respectively set down at the inn three passengers of no very ordinary description—"tall, likely-looking young gentlemen!" as the hostess would have said.

The two fellow-passengers had just dismounted and ordered their portmanteaus to be carried into the house, when the single traveller sprang down from the conveyance; and though his muffled form and slouched cap, hiding much of his face, seemed to wear some semblance of disguise, they might also have been intended only as a defence against the cold of that January weather—for there was nothing savouring in the least of caution or disguise in the open, fearless manner in which, as his feet touched the ground, he called on the hostler to carry in his luggage also.

“Holloa!” cried the youngest of the two before-mentioned arrivals, moving hastily forward at the sound of the well-known voice, with a gesture of surprise and pleasure—“Gerald, can this be you?”

“By Jove!” exclaimed the other, with quite as much astonishment, though perhaps with less of unmingled delight, pulling up, as he spoke, the military cap from his brow, and revealing indeed the handsome, manly countenance of Gerald Cameron, as the lantern flashed upon it—“why Alick, as I am alive! Who would have expected this, old fellow?”

And the brothers wrung each other’s hand with affectionate warmth.

The third party, on finding who his companion’s friend proved to be, approached and congratulated him on his return to England.

“What, Sackville, you also here! How does all this happen?” continued Gerald, in amaze.

“We should rather ask that question of

you, I think," Alick replied. "Come in, and tell us what brought you here in such a hurry; for you only could have arrived in England the day before yesterday," he continued, as they entered the inn's best parlour, and approached the bright fire. "I was hastening to meet you in London."

"*You*—then why are you here? Where did you come from?" Gerald evasively enquired.

"From the Duke's place in ———, where Sackville and I have been shooting for the last week. And why came I here? Oh, the fact is, that none of us have seen Lena for so long, that as it would but delay me a night, turning out of the way to the Towers, I thought I would do so."

"And Sackville and you are going to spend the night over there?" said Gerald, with rather a blank visage.

"Oh no—not quite that—where are you going, Sackville?"

“ Only to see what we can have for dinner,” the young man replied, as he left the room.

“ Gerald, the fact is,” Alick continued, turning again towards his brother, “ poor Lena——”

“ Good God!” she is not ill, I hope?” cried Gerald.

“ Oh no—it is not that, as far as we know—— another young Beauchamp is expected soon—— but the truth is, none of us have seen her lately——never since my father and mother were there, nearly a year ago. They are all perfectly wretched about her, my mother broken-hearted; and I determined, before I went back to Ireland, I would have some personal account to take them about her; and resolved am I to do so. I therefore intend walking up after their dinner, and desiring to see her for an hour alone. I do not wish to break bread or sleep a single night under her husband’s roof, but I *will* see my sister—as her brother, they shall not prevent me. Gerald, did the spirit move you to do the same, or were you audacious

enough to propose offering yourself as a guest in this lion's den?"

"Yes—no—something of the sort. I thought I would just run down here and have a look," Gerald said, incoherently.

"Well, I shall not be sorry to have you to back me; and if you are up to staying there longer, so much the better. I cannot well leave Sackville alone, and of course he neither could or would intrude himself uninvited; he only accompanied me here out of kindness. That poor dear girl! I am miserable about her—shut up from us all in this way;" and Alick sadly leant his head upon his hand.

Gerald, pacing the room uneasily, began asking more general information relative to his family at large, his mind evidently strongly divided by some more pressing and present subject of interest.

The circumstances of his case were certainly fraught with no small degree of agitation and

anxiety, as our readers will easily imagine when let into his secrets.

Gerald Cameron was the creature of impulse—of quick excitement—a character which too often possesses what is good and beautiful floating on the surface—lovely to the eye, and pleasant to the fancy—but brittle, disappointing as the glittering icicle, seized by the admiring child, and melting away within its grasp. It is such characters who too often cause the victims of their fascination to think that they have truly “sown in joy and reaped in tears.” Their professions and protestations may be sincere at the time—heart-felt for the moment—but wait the hour of trial, and see—

“Nor wonder at their frailty.”

But it is not always so: often deep-seated beneath this light wavering glass of impulse, feeling and action lie stern, unalterable—honour, unswerving rectitude, the counteracting

bias of all such effects. Then that honour, that rectitude, stand forth to protect the vows and resolutions which impulse—that feeling of a moment—prompted, and keeps alive, and maintains the will for their fulfilment,

And thus was it with Gerald Cameron. Perhaps few would have blamed him very severely if the flame lighted up in his generous nature—the pity kindled into love for the poor ill-treated Agnes—had as quickly died away. Some might have deemed it not inexcusable if the vows and promises into which he had been surprised by the excitement of the moment had as quickly passed away from his remembrance. New scenes, new circumstances, might very naturally have concurred to efface all serious impression as to the weight and responsibilities attached to the boyish frolic in the saloon of Belgrave Square.

But, as we have said, Gerald Cameron, the creature of impulse, was also the soul of honour—words once gone forth from his lips

were bonds; and neither change of time, scene, nor circumstances had the effect of causing him to consider the professions whispered in the young girl's ears otherwise than sacred vows. That parting kiss still lingered on his lips—as a charm not to be cancelled without shame and dishonour—a pledge which there needed not even the jetty tress in his possession to remind him by its more sensible presence of all he had pledged himself to perform. Thus, as he dared not, for the poor girl's sake, attempt any communication by letter, all that had passed between them in any way calculated to keep alive his own steadfastness and her faith and hope during the interval of separation had been the line traced by Agnes in Annie's letter, and the guarded answer conveyed by him in one to Lena—

“Remember me, I beg—kindly, if it will not be considered a liberty—to the Miss Beauchamps; in particular to Miss Agnes, with whom I am more intimately acquainted. I can

never forget my friends." Then immediately adding—"In January I hope certainly to return to England. Now, dear Lena, do not, as is generally the custom, consider it quite unnecessary to fulfil my commission just stated. You know not how tenacious one feels in a foreign land, surrounded by strangers, of being remembered by English friends, especially by ladies fair."

This had been sufficient for both purposes. Over the few lines of Agnes', which, by their trembling, unstudied character, spoke to his heart and eye all the fluttered emotions which dictated them, he renewed his vows of love and fidelity.

And she—oh, who could paint the ecstasy, the tears, the hysterical laughter, with which the girl, when she had obtained possession of the bit of paper on which—as if for that purpose—her lover had written the postscript, which contained his last quoted passage, fled

with it into privacy, and gloated over its contents.

Lena, in one of the few opportunities of being alone with Agnes, had kindly said—“Here, Agnes dear, I have a message for you from Gerald, which he tells me I must be sure to give you;” and she read the lines.

But every pulse of Agnes’ heart had stopped its beatings—her head swam with indistinct sounds; and when Lena had finished speaking, she stretched forth her hand gaspingly to receive the document, which was unhesitatingly relinquished. Lena thought the emotion she witnessed in poor Agnes was caused by the gratification of being remembered and noticed by her brother; and when her young sister, with a nervous laugh to hide her agitation, murmured, “May I have it?” she said—“Oh yes, if it pleases, dear Agnes,” and tore off the desired fragment.

From that day—it was but some months before the January in question—the state of

irritable excitement in which Agnes existed is not to be described. And much did it increase as she saw the time so ardently expected drawing near. That which at a distance had been the romantic dream, in which all risk, danger, and difficulty was set at nought, began now to assume the form of substantial reality—beset with a host of formidable impediments, doubts, uncertainties, and terrors.

How would it all be? Would Gerald really come to her deliverance—how fly to meet him? And then the dreadful chance of failure—of discovery—*ruin!*

For what would be the consequence of her mother's rage if such disasters should occur? What retribution would she consider sufficient for such an offence?

Her sisters could not assist her much. Rachel resisted her desperate wish to write to Gerald. She deemed it would be highly improper on Agnes' part to make any further advances. If Gerald were a man of honour, he

would redeem his pledge—and the Camerons were all honourable people—she must wait. So waited she had—but with no patient spirit. Even her mother, in the wretched girl's desperate state of mind and feeling, failed to impress her with the abject terror of yore; and Agnes drew upon herself, by her reckless contempt of her authority and threats, the extremest rigour of maternal law.

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It was but the very same day that we find the young Camerons at the roadside inn that Agnes had been released from solitary confinement, and the discipline appeared to have produced its due effect, for she had issued from it on the morning of the above said day, tame and submissive to a degree—at least to all appearance—desirous, even eager, to fulfil the tasks and duties imposed upon her.

That same night the governess and the pupil were together in the schoolroom: all was still-

ness in that remote part of the mansion. The elder sisters, as usual, were spending the evening below. Miss Ricketts, still an invalid, was seated on one side of the fireplace, in an easy chair, the only seat coming at all under the denomination allowed within that chamber of penance.

Agnes occupied one of the more straight-backed pieces of furniture, supplied for the use of the pupils. A book was in her hand—her most hated and wearisome task-book—“Paley’s Evidences;” a work which, in the case of poor Agnes, was only instrumental in rendering the Christian religion apparently a dry, flat, and unprofitable truth.

It is through the affections of the young, conviction must hope to find its first entrance into the understanding. And what had Agnes heard and felt of the Christian religion, save by the dull, unmeaning routine of task-books?

“The letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive.”

What had she seen of the love, joy, peace, long-suffering, patience, gentleness, meekness, which maketh Religion true and lovely to the young heart?

“ See how those Christians bite and devour one another,” said the heathen of old; and if the young live in daily sight and communication of a like example, can Paley, or all the school of theology combined, impress them with the truth and beauty of the Christian faith? If they find not the influence of religion in the silent course of private and domestic life, it will be hard to rouse the understanding to abstract even a vague idea of the blessedness of a source from which they reap so little sensible advantage.

Besides—who ever studied Paley to any profit or pleasure, with a lover running continually in their head? And this had been Agnes Beauchamp’s case for the last year and a half. But now that, as if with more than ordinary attention, the book was held up before her

eyes, did one line—nay, one word—of the page on which they were fixed force itself in the most distant manner to her perception?

We should think not, indeed. It was no light of revelation that gleamed and danced, by fits and starts, in the young girl's countenance. Suddenly she lowered her book, and her eyes looked towards Miss Ricketts.

There was something peculiar in that look. It was neither the timid, piteous glance, of earlier days, when Agnes was a gentle, frightened child, nor was it one of sullen, sulky vindictiveness or open impertinence, to which the governess was accustomed, by the more recent demeanour of the young girl.

“Are you perfectly prepared, Miss Agnes for the written summary I shall expect next Sunday, of the last chapter?”

“The last chapter!” Agnes repeated, with a strange sort of smile. “Is it the last chapter?” looking down upon the book; “how odd!”

“Odd? Pray why, miss?”

Agnes did not reply; but with the same expression of countenance, her eye travelled with still stronger interest around that dismal apartment, as if every long familiar hated object had suddenly changed their aspect; even as the prisoner has been known to gaze, on the eve of liberation, around his before loathed prison, and to feel a pang of such a complicated nature as that which saddened her countenance, when again her glance fixed itself upon the governess.

The softened expression visible therein struck even Miss Ricketts’ jaundiced perception—and she was marvelling in silence what it might signify, when she was still more startled by the sudden apostrophe of her pupil.

“Miss Ricketts, how do you feel to-night?”

The governess looked at Agnes, at first puzzled and perplexed by the degree of unwonted interest implied not only in the words, but in the earnest tone in which they were spoken. But then, as if suspicious that some treason

lurked beneath, she answered, shortly and sharply—

“ Pretty well, I thank you, Miss Agnes.”

“ You look ill,” continued the pupil; and there was a sound of kind feeling in the girl’s voice, which the heart of the poor worn-out governess, weakened by illness, could not quite resist; and it checked the first ungracious impulse which prompted her to interpret this attention into—“ *She wishes me to go to bed.*”

“ That cannot concern you much, Miss Agnes, nor grieve you much either, I should think.”

“ Yes, indeed it does, Miss Ricketts, *now*,” Agnes replied, with emotion.

“ Now, and pray why?” the governess demanded, looking somewhat surprised.

“ Because—because,” murmured Agnes, with rising agitation, “ I—forgive you, Miss Ricketts, for all you have made *me* suffer;” and she rose from her seat and approached the amazed governess, and kissed her contracted forehead,

which for many a long year had never felt the pressure of human lips; "and I hope you will forgive me all my many offences towards you. If you had been more gentle, perhaps—but that does not matter now;" and her nervous emotion increasing, Agnes stopped short and wept hysterically.

Miss Ricketts was thunderstruck. She thought her own death must surely be very near, or her pupil's mind distraught.

"Sit down, Miss Agnes!" she said; "compose yourself, or I must send for Lady Rachel."

Agnes, with a glance of terror at that last threat, resumed her seat, but not her former efforts to composure—an anxious, eager, listening look was in her distended eyes, and pale face.

She started wildly when the door opened to admit the still-room maid, who entered, saying that she had come to ask what Miss Ricketts would please to fancy for supper. She approached and stood between the governess and her pupil.

A look and a movement of the woman's lips, as for one moment she turned her head towards the latter, caused Agnes to spring to her feet, with a scarcely smothered cry, but as speedily to sink back; and till Jane had left the room, in that attitude she remained.

Then rising, she murmured, in a hurried, scarce audible tone—

“If you please—I must go to bed—I am ill;” and mechanically Agnes put forth her hand—but not able to await with propriety the cold, suspiciously delayed return, or the severely conveyed permission, impatiently she waved her hand, and burst from the governess's presence.

CHAPTER X.

“ And now, fair dames, methinks I see
You listen to my minstrelsy ;
Your waving locks ye backward throw,
And sidelong bend your necks of snow :
Ye ween to hear a melting tale,
Of two true lovers in a dale.”

The Lay of the Last Minstrel.

WE will now return to the two at the Beauchamp Arms, who, soon after young Sackville rejoined his companions, sat down to as comfortable a dinner as the inn could afford, to satisfy the appetites of three hungry travellers. Yet neither of the trio talked or laughed, or ate, with the hearty zest natural to their age and circumstances.

Soon after the repast was over, Alick sprung up, saying,

“Well, Gerald, what do you think about moving? Sackville, will you walk down with us, or stay here and ‘take thine ease in thine inn’ till I return?”

“Oh, I’ll go and have a look at the outside of the Towers—it seems a fine moonlight night,” replied Sackville, hurriedly.

“Well, Gerald, what do you think about moving?” Alick again said, looking for his great coat.

But Gerald still stood in a thoughtful attitude, with his back to the fire. *

“Well, I’ll walk down with you,” he answered, rousing himself; “but I have changed my mind, and won’t go in.”

“Not go in and see Lena!” Alick cried in surprise.

“Not go in and see your sister!” Sackville seemed by his countenance to echo.

“No, I think not—I’ll wait to-night, at any rate.”

“But Lena will think it so extraordinary,” argued Alick.

“No she won’t—besides, she does not know I am here. I shall see her shortly, I dare say,” Gerald added, somewhat mysteriously, as he equipped himself for the intended walk. “Now come along!” and the two sallied forth together.

Gerald was rallied on the way by both his companions on his mysterious, unaccountable determination; they declared he was afraid of Lady Rachel. Alick still persisted how strange his conduct would appear to Lena.

“For I cannot hide from her that I have seen you, if, as she is sure to do, she enquires concerning your expected return.”

Still Gerald was impenetrable on that point. He laughed and whistled away the subject, and grew excited in spirits, till suddenly, between the moonlit trees, they caught a view of the

heavy turreted Towers, lying dark and massive in the shade, a light only here and there gleaming from its windows, like the glimmer which proclaimed the Ogre's Castle to the benighted traveller in the fairy tales.

“Well, we had better make a halt here!” Gerald said, as a more open view of the house was gained “One word Alick;” and passing his arm within his brother's, he drew him on a few paces, whilst he said, in a low voice—

“Alick, do me a favour; if possible do not mention my being here to Lena or any one in the house. I have a particular reason, which I cannot explain now.”

“My dear Gerald, there is some mystery in all this,” Alick answered.

“Well, never mind, my good fellow, you are not concerned in it; so only leave me alone, if you please, and act and speak as if you had never met me in this deuced unlucky way—now go on with you. Poor darling Lena! I

should have liked to have seen her, but it could not be helped," and he turned round to rejoin Sackville, murmuring to himself—

"It cannot be to-night, certainly. He shall not be implicated in the affair. He must be safe out of the way—and then, poor little treasure, I will make haste and carry her off as fast as she likes from that wretched, cursed jail-house of hers."

Gerald found Sackville standing—the pale moonbeams falling upon his melancholy countenance, gazing earnestly upon the mansion, as if he too possessed some treasure within the gloomy walls.

Truly no callous feelings moved within the young man's breast—for he did feel that there indeed was buried his heart's first and only love, his lily Queen—

"His dream by night, his vision of the morn."

Thus for a moment would he think of her; then as the weeping, blushing bride—or again

the sad sweet wedded wife, of more recent remembrance, and he sighed deeply as Gerald stood by his side.

It was a pure harmless feeling of romance—no unhappy passion which prompted the sigh! The same spirit which had brought him there to gaze upon the spot where dwelt the lady of his love, and the poetic simple thoughts which filled his mind, would have wronged no one within that mansion—meet and fitting tributes for the pure, the spotless being, on whom they fell.

The dreamer was drawn from his abstraction by the voice of the wide-awake, unmeditating Gerald.

“Sackville, we had better walk back, or we may have Lady Rachel’s bloodhounds (for she *must have* bloodhounds) upon us; and as you are a romantic fellow, I’ll let you into a secret of mine—quite as good as any novel, you will say. But, joking apart—seriously, my good

fellow—for it is a most grand matter, I assure you—listen to me, and

‘I’ll a tale unfold,’

which will astonish you not a little. I am come here to run away with young Agnes Beauchamp!”

Sackville looked indeed astonished—incredulous.

“You are not serious, Cameron?”

“Serious—yes, serious enough, I can tell you. You shall hear all about it.”

And Gerald’s story was told as they paced back through the park.

But the concluding facts in explanation of his present position are necessary to be detailed.

Gerald’s first thought on landing in England was Agnes. His pledge and promise—they must be fulfilled, and speedily too. His was not a spirit to delay, and hesitate, and postpone.

“If ’twere done—when ’tis done—then ’twere well it were done quickly,” was ever his theory. And how much more so in the present case, when another’s hopes hung doubtless on the speedy accomplishment of the deed!

But Gerald was, at the same time, not a little puzzled as to the way and means. So strictly confined and overlooked was Agnes, that the difficulty consisted in how to manage a meeting or any communication necessary for the arrangement of the affair. His quick wit and ready invention served Gerald at this juncture.

Her sisters had at first occurred to him; they were doubtless in the secret. But then, writing to them would be hazarding the same risk of discovery; their letters also being probably as surely under Lady Rachel’s *surveillance*. They might also shrink from becoming parties to so desperate a step on their sister’s part—one which must inevitably draw upon them such

depths of retributive anger, if their co-operation in the step were afterwards discovered.

The young man was racking his brains to discover the best plan he could pursue, when suddenly a thought struck him——“Jane Pratt!”

How often he remembered poor Agnes, in her Beechy Place revelations, mentioning that name, as the confidential purveyor to all the clandestine back stairs proceedings of her sisters.

Yes, he would risk it—he would, through the medium of this renowned “Jane Pratt,” communicate with his imprisoned love.

So, taking the chance of the aforesaid Jane Pratt being still at the Towers, he wrote a letter to Agnes, enclosed in a cover, directed in the still-room maid’s lover style of penmanship, to “Jane Pratt,” with the following lines—

“JANE PRATT,

“I will give you ten bright sovereigns, if you will give the enclosed safely and secretly into Miss Agnes Beau-

champ's hands. I know you are always a friend to the young ladies in their times of need—be so in the present instance, and you will have gained another friend for life, in—

GERALD CAMERON."

Nothing more need be related than that Jane Pratt proved "a friend indeed." Not only was the letter delivered into the ecstatic Agnes's own hands in secrecy and safety, but with eager interest and zest did Jane enter into, and pledge herself to aid and abet to the extent of her ability, the lovers' cause.

She was an active, quick witted creature, fond of all kinds of gossip, frolic, and adventure, moreover, attached and disinterested, needing no bribe to make her a sworn ally in such a cause to one of her young ladies.

No fear of Lady Rachel's wrath could move her. She could but lose her place, and she would as soon have become at any moment, maid of all work to Rachel or Agnes—her two

favorites, who she pitied from the bottom of her kind heart.

So to cut the matter short—on this memorable night now in question, Jane Pratt might have been seen issuing from a door leading from the offices, about eight o'clock, to meet and negotiate with Gerald Cameron, who was expected to arrive, as we see he did, at the Beauchamp Arms by that hour. How and why she proceeded so short a distance on her way, and returned so speedily to the school-room to enquire concerning Miss Rickett's supper, we shall presently see. But first, a little word with our readers—at least with those to whom this part of our story may be of more immediate interest—we mean the youthful daughters of our land.

With a smile of amused expectation (we would fain that it were a blush of ingenuous shame, that such things *could be*)—some bright eyes may be bent over these pages, anxious to arrive at the history of *the elopement*—if indeed

fiction has retained the power of exciting interest, in a day when real life begins so readily and commonly to afford them the excitement of such events.

They hear of their inferiors—their equals—even the most exalted in rank and station—the nobility of their country, flying in the face—not only of filial duty, gratitude, and subjection, but—(though it may seem harsh to say so—) of delicacy, propriety, nay, even decency. For so do we deem the fugitive or stolen marriages—the kitchen-maid style of matrimony, which young ladies in our time seem so fond of adopting—how then can we expect Agnes Beauchamp's case to raise the blush of offended modesty, or call down upon her any very serious condemnation?

The day has passed, we grieve to say, when such things as we are about to detail, are deemed as unmaidenly—unseemly in well conducted, properly nurtured damsels—a bold in-

dependent step from which “a gentle young lady” must shrink with shamefacedness.

To us it appears humiliating to the female sex to imagine it possible that an English girl—belonging to that country to which was once attached the proud boast that “all her sons were brave, and all her daughters chaste,” can start from her home like an ill-used servant, and fly from her parents—parents often, who have loved her too well, if not too wisely—that she should throw herself, without a thought of the consequences, on the protection, the honour, of a comparative stranger!

And this girl has from her birth been surrounded by that guard—that halo of watchful, ladylike scrutiny and care, of which our British daughters are so constantly the objects, in our homes of respectability, and happiness—whose mind was considered so pure—so child-like—so unsullied by every idea approaching to impurity! Alas! that she should thus belie the promise of her youth—should submit with-

out shame to all the attendant improprieties of an elopement !

Bold must be the eye, courageous the heart, of a young creature, that can unblushingly encounter the curious gaze of those, who so unsparingly gloat upon the amusing spectacle of a runaway couple.

To us, we must confess, that it is a sight from which we turn with a feeling approaching to disgust—begging humbly the pardon of all such adventurous couples ; but we always endeavour to express and write our sentiments as they really are, not according to the true novel-writing style—rendering them so as they may best tally. With amusing fiction, the truth as it is, and the moral of the truth, is, and has always been, our sincere and anxious aim.

And let us still hope that there are the largest proportion of welleducated filial daughters of our land, who, if brought to the test, would shew themselves true to the principles in which they have been nurtured. For their sakes we therefore

would pause to exculpate ourselves from any intention to regard as careless levity the conduct of poor Agnes Beauchamp. Yet whose conduct can be deemed worthy of excuse if not hers? Indeed, she can scarcely afford a precedent for the generality of such proceedings; for we should hope there are few Lady Rachels in the world—few parents whose conduct can afford the same excuse for thus offending—a shadow of excuse which, in the accusing hour of sorrow, or day of death, when the buoyant hopes and pleasures of youth have faded away, or proved deceitful, would avail to cover from the conscience the memory of their filial transgression.

“ Yes! turn from the false tongues that flatter ;
They cannot ennoble a crime,
Oh! think of the thorns they would scatter
O’er thy path in the dark winter time.

“ The home of thy youth may be lonely ;
The friends of thy youth may be cold ;
The morals they teach may be only
Fit chains for the feeble and old !

Yet, though they may fetter a spirit
That soars in the pride of thy prime,
The friends of thy infancy merit
All they love in the dark winter time."

So speaks the poet. But are there many youthful hearts who will respond, and duteously own that it is indeed meet, right, and their bounden duty to cast honor and gratitude, love, obedience, nay, the sacrifice of their hearts' young desires, at the feet of the author of their being?

Alas!—false enthusiastic stretch of the fifth commandment would such conduct now be deemed; and if we fear to look around and watch for the genuine blush of offended modesty to mantle on our English maidens' cheeks in condemnation of the indelicacy of an elopement, still less can we hope to find it considered in this sense.

No—*Lovers of themselves, disobedient to parents, unthankful, without natural affection*, are some of the characteristics of these latter days—set

forth in Scripture—which mankind seem hastening to fulfil.

Selfish, disobedient, ungrateful daughters of our land, knit not your angry brows at this, but by your future conduct shew that “such are none of ye.” Swell no more the list of “disobedient children,” but be the “many daughters” we trust it still contains, who “do virtuously.” Lend not your pure maiden names to be the sport, the byword of the idle public, the song of the vulgar, the gossip of the town and neighbourhood—believe us, when we say, it will be your shame, not your glory—nay, more; that it may be well with you “in the land where nought but the word of God endureth for ever,” pause ere, for the gratification of any selfish passion, will, or fancy, you bow down your parents’ heads, with shame, or bitter sorrow and disappointment, and wound their parental love or pride. Be tender even of their vain worldliness or selfishness if you will so call it. Be subject not only to the good and

gentle, but to the froward. Be thus subject, thus dutiful, and you shall not lose your reward.

“ And faint not,
Though the tears of anguish flow ;
But with the conscious glow
Of honourable thought and deed below,
Look to that Power who watched thy self-denial.”

But one word more before we end the chapter—one word to mothers—fathers. We have, after all, a love—tender feeling and interest towards all the young daughters of the day. It is parents we would at times feel the most inclined to be hard upon—with them the blame often rests. When an event such as we have deprecated happens in a family, “a screw is generally loose” in the *ménage*, depend upon it.

Let mothers and daughters live together in *unreserved confidence*—let constant friendly affection subsist between them ; kindness,

tempered with due authority, rivets the ties of filial obedience firmly, immoveably; and then—unless there be innate depravity existing in the heart of a daughter—with a mother whom she respects as well as loves, a girl (we imagine) will even sacrifice her love to the shrine of filial devotion, and there will be no more runaway marriages.

CHAPTER XI.

“Plead you to me, fair dame ? I know you not :
In Ephesus I am but two hours old,
As strange unto your town, as to your talk ;
Who every word by all my wit being scanned,
Want wit in all one word to understand.”

“ I never saw her ’till this time ;
I never spake with her in all my life.”

Comedy of Errors.

WHEN Alick Cameron parted from his companions, he had entered the court surrounding the front of the mansion, and was just raising his eyes to survey the gloomy edifice into which he was about to enter, an unbidden guest, when he heard a footstep hastily approaching towards him, and soon perceived that it was a female

figure in a bonnet and shawl, who, stopping at a little distance beneath the shadow of the wall, was beckoning him that he should approach her.

Thinking that the woman must have mistaken him for some one else, he was about to disregard those signals, by turning to approach the hall-door, when, coming still nearer, and redoubling her endeavours to engage his attention, he heard her whisper distinctly—

“Mr. Cameron—Mr. Cameron! You must not go there, for the world, sir. This way, if you please!” And the astonished, puzzled Alick, mechanically obeying her authoritative directions, followed her steps along the left wing of the mansion, from which she had appeared, till, having turned a corner, they stood at a door leading apparently into some of the domestic offices.

“What does this mean, my good woman? Am I expected?” Alick began.

“Expected! Sir? yes, Sir! I was just

going up to the village to see if you had come. My poor young lady is in an awful state to see you—it was very venturesome to come to the front door; but as you are here, I can get you upstairs to have a talk as well, and as safe as possible, if you'll follow me."

More perplexed and mystified than ever, Alick thought to himself—

"Can it be Lena of whom she speaks? is it possible that her husband's jealous tyranny has arrived at such a point, as to oblige her to make use of artifices to obtain an interview even with her brother?"

In the meantime, Jane Pratt pushed open the door that admitted them into a sort of wash-house or scullery; and throwing aside her walking apparel into a corner and smoothing her cap, shewed herself a remarkably good-looking woman of about thirty. She put her finger to her lips as he was about again to beg for a more explicit explanation with regard to this most mysterious, unaccountable means of introduction into his sister's home; but having

lighted a candle from the lamp suspended from the ceiling of a passage, into which the entrance led, she quickly preceded the young man through dimly lighted vault-like passages—the sound from the doors around plainly indicating the vicinity to be the offices of the mansion—but without encountering any one; and then they ascended a winding staircase—traversing more passages—up more steps—cross questions and crooked answers passing between Alick and his *cicerone*, tending to put the former more in the dark, and to render the latter less sensible of any mistake under which she might be labouring, whilst so eagerly and securely pursuing her undertaking.

At length, close to the landing place of a last flight of steps, she paused at a door, opened it, and ushered Alick into a room; smiled a congratulatory and well pleased smile, and with a significant nod, left him alone.

It was the play-room, in which the hero of this adventure now unconsciously found him-

self. He looked around him, wondering where he was, and what was to happen next. There was nothing in the aspect of the chamber to enlighten him as to its character—indeed, it would have presented rather a puzzling appearance to any eye. Almost carpetless—comfortless as it seemed legitimately intended to be—the fire burning dimly in the grate—the thread-bare appearance of the small old turkey carpet laid down near it—the strange and whimsical collection of old furniture of various ages—evidently drawn from a long banishment to the lumber room, for the use of this disregarded room—all around shewed the apartment to be inhabited, though by what class of individuals it would be hard to guess.

Alick could scarcely think it was his sister who occupied it; yet he thought—by who else could he be expected, and whose, but his Lena's, could be the light step which soon echoed along the passage—whose, the young

voice, he heard murmur in indistinct accents, some whispered sentence of inquiry from without.

The question was in reality thus—

“Is it really he?”

And the answer,

“Yes, Miss! cheer up—your lover to be sure it is, and if ever there was an angel in the shape of a lover, he’s one.”

The listener, however, distinguished not the words, and half opened his arms, as the door was eagerly but tremblingly thrown open, and through the partial darkness of the room, a form had soon flown within them wildly, yet timidly. Like a young antelope, she bounded into his embrace, and hid her head on his bosom.

But how was all this? If this momentary vision of the pale, dark girl who had flown into his presence, had not plainly convinced him that it was not his fair lily sister—the dark silken hair, over which he bent in momentary

bewilderment, but still more, perhaps, the true instinct of his heart, revealed fully his mistake. The young man stepped back, gently, yet effectually releasing himself from his fair burden.

Yes, she stood thus alone before her supposed lover, gazing up into his face, confused murmurs only issuing from her parted, quivering lips; the first flush of agitation and emotion rendering her insensible to the unloverlike movement which had thus repelled her, and blinding her to any want of identity she might have discerned in the beautiful, but astonished countenance of the tall figure before her.

But the cold word of—"Mistake"—the still colder glance, could they long refrain from arousing her from her happy unconsciousness? No! Rising with an expression of dismay, she hid her burning brow upon her tightly clenched hands, and gasped—

"Oh, why then did you come, if it is but to

look thus upon me? Mistake! oh, no: am I then so changed? It is Agnes herself—Agnes changed, perhaps with waiting—longing—weeping for your return—and now you *are* come to tell her you do not know her—to disown her—to break the promise on which she has existed ever since you left her.”

“This is very strange—are you really aware who I am, young lady?” Alick began, with distressed concern and embarrassment, but with gentle, delicate kindness of tone and manner, so peculiarly his own—“May I ask *who* you take me for? Look at me again, and you will perhaps be undeceived.”

At the sound of his voice, in which, indeed, there was a slightly strange and unfamiliar tone, Agnes lifted up her eyes, and gazed with startled uncertainty upon her companion's face. But the scrutiny seemed but to increase the irritating uncertainty of the bewildered, excited girl.

“Yes! it is he most certainly—yet no—it is

like him—so like—yet so different! His eyes—his hair—his mouth—I know them all so well. And yet he looks upon me so differently—so coldly—and he is thinner, paler. Ah, how is all this? Is it really—really?—He must be dead,” she cried, with hysterical, passionate terror; “she said he was like an angel, and this is his spirit come to kill me too.”

And now, indeed, Alick was convinced that the dark suspicion which had floated across his mind, had too much foundation—that the poor girl was doubtless touched in the brain. He had never seen Agnes before, only heard that there was a third daughter kept quite out of the way—never brought forward into society. And indeed, in the wild pitch of excitement into which the wretched girl had worked herself, from the fear—the doubt—which seemed suddenly to threaten to destroy the hope and confidence with which she had buoyed herself, very little was wanting in the present state of her mind, to render him right in his startling con-

jecture. With her wild, distended eyes, pale, eager countenance, and disordered tresses, truly, poor girl, she was the very personification of madness.

Alick looked with kind pity upon her, and said softly and distinctly—

“I am Alick Cameron, Miss Beauchamp; I do not think I ever had the pleasure of meeting you before.”

“Alick Cameron? not Gerald!” she faintly shrieked—subdued in a moment into more reasonablelike dismay and confusion. Hiding her face in her hands, and stamping her little foot in passionate distress, she murmured—

“But how is this? why did you come here? I am lost—undone!”

Suspensions, approaching nearer to the truth, by this time suggested themselves to Alick’s mind; Gerald’s unexpected and mysterious journey to the Towers so soon after his arrival in England—his evident discomfiture at meeting himself and Sackville! It was all startling

and scarcely credible; but that Gerald was connected with the adventure into which he had been so erroneously drawn, was most certain, and of its nature there was but one interpretation.

“No! I am not Gerald,” he said. “My brother——”

“Where—oh where is he?” cried Agnes, springing up, once more forgetful of all else; with clasped hands, and wild beseeching eyes.

“Oh tell me—tell me—is he come?”

“My brother arrived this evening at the village inn, at the same time as I did,” Alick answered, hesitatingly; for he scarcely knew what should be his course of conduct in this new and puzzling situation.

A gleam of renovated joy shone in Agnes’s eyes.

“And what am I to do?” she murmured, as she stood, breathless and eager as a young hart, ready to start at the first sound of the

hunter's horn, and looked at Alick as if for aid. But she met only his cold, quiet, unanswering gaze.

"I am not in my brother's secrets, Miss Beauchamp, therefore I fear I can be of little service. Perchance you will be so good as to tell me," he continued, glancing towards the door, "what *I* had better do? Perhaps my guide will reconduct me, by the way I came, that I may enter and introduce myself in more proper form, by the front entrance. Do you not think this would be better?" he added, with a gentle, encouraging smile, considerably intended to allay a little of the confusion by which the young creature seemed now overwhelmed.

"You will not betray us?" she asked, imploringly, her head bent low upon her bosom, "oh, in mercy, do not ruin me for ever!"

"I think I had better return to Gerald at once," Alick ejaculated, aloud, "and see——"

Agnes gasped eagerly—quickly lifting up her head at these words—"Take me to him!"

“Miss Beauchamp, you do not consider what you ask of me,” Alick answered, gravely. “No—no; really,” he added, shaking his head, with a half smile, “you cannot be serious.”

He bowed, and was turning away, when a stifled shriek burst from Agnes’s lips. She clung to his cloak, and gasped—

“Save me—save me !”

For a murmur of voices had fallen upon her ear from without, and *one* voice——!

What spirit of mischief had been afloat that night, and moved the Lady Rachel, at that unusual hour, to look after the concerns of her governess and youngest daughter? for she, it too truly was, who in another moment stood facing Agnes and Alick Cameron.

That her ladyship’s eyes glared upon the scene presenting itself to her sight, without power to credit that they saw aright, may easily be supposed. To find her daughter under

circumstances of any such nature, was of itself a sufficient crime—but that she should behold in her audacious companion, her modest, unobjectionable youth, Alick Cameron, was a stunning and incomprehensible discovery.

But Lady Rachel was not one to remain very long under any such passive influence. In another instant—with the gripe of a vice—she had seized her trembling daughter's slight arm, and severed her from the protection to which she still clung; then with a withering sneer of suppressed rage, her ladyship turned from one to the other of the culprits, and begged to know what all this meant.

“I am almost as much at a loss as yourself, Madam,” the young man answered, calmly, and with dignity. “My position must indeed seem to you—as it did to myself, a minute ago—most strangely unaccountable, and suspicious—but let me beg you to believe that the interview, in which you have surprised this young lady and myself, was equally unsought

for, or desired by both your daughter and myself, as you may suppose, considering that this is the first time I ever beheld Miss Beauchamp, and, as far as I am aware, she never having before seen your humble servant."

Lady Rachel stood in stern silence. Alick therefore continued—

"Having occasion to pass this way, *en route* from the Duke of Stratheden's, and wishing to see my sister before I returned to Ireland, I made bold to walk over from the inn where I am putting up for the night, for the purpose of requesting to be allowed to spend with her an hour of this evening; I can assure your Ladyship, that she was the only person into whose presence I had the presumption to desire to introduce myself;" and Alick bowed with the same calm dignity, with which he had accounted for his conduct. He was called upon, for the sake of others, to proceed no further.

"Some great mistake, no doubt!" her Lady-

ship rejoined, turning with a blasting sneer of bitter irony upon Agnes; "one which this innocent young lady may perhaps explain. Will you favour me, madam, by informing me how—if this young gentleman's statement be true—how you and your worshipful allies (for such you must possess) have contrived to introduce Mr. Cameron into your fair company, rather than into the presence which he originally sought? These are indeed pretty doings to be carried on in a respectable house amongst *my daughters*! That fool—that poor, worn-out fool, Ricketts, sitting over her gruel, with such things passing at her very elbow! But speak, madam, I command you—clear yourself—or——"

"Let go my arm, mother!" Agnes murmured moodily, writhing beneath her grasp, more from the pain it inflicted, than from mental fright—for she was goaded on to reckless desperation. "What he tells you is true," she said; "it was not my fault, more than his, that

he was brought here. It was a mistake—I did not want *him*.”

“Want *him*—who then, pray madam? A mistake?—then there was some one you *did* want?” and Lady Rachel shook her daughter’s arm with increased vehemence.

“May I be allowed, madam, to retire?” interposed Alick, hurt and disgusted with so shocking an exposure, and very sorry for the poor girl. “I regret extremely that I should have been the cause of so distressing a scene; but as you have been, I hope, in a satisfactory manner, convinced that it is all a strange mistake, I hope your anger towards your daughter will cease. Here is a letter from the Duchess to my sister, if you wish for any further proof of——”

“*Satisfactory manner!*” interrupted Lady Rachel, turning towards Alick with an effort at something like dignified composure. “Yes, Sir, as far as concerns your part in the mistake, certainly so—I have no reason to

doubt the perfect truth of the statement, this young lady so ingenuously confirms," she added with bitter irony, "that it was not *you* she wanted. Yes, I think we have sufficiently exposed ourselves before you. You have had a tolerable specimen of what can be going forward in a decent establishment, to tell the world to wonder no longer at a mother's need of scrutiny over *her daughters*! Mr. Cameron, I will send some one to conduct you elsewhere. And you—come with me, madam!" And Lady Rachel dragged Agnes with her from the apartment, but at the door was faced by Jane Pratt.

"My lady—my lady, listen to me if you please—it was all my fault—indeed it was."

"Your fault, woman!—oh, you are the kind pander to the Miss Beauchamps' frolics—I have had a hint of this before; but speak, and then leave the house for ever, without an hour's delay."

"My lady, Miss Ricketts will tell you that

Miss Agnes was ill to-night—quite light-headed—I was really frightened; I ran out to see if I could find Mr. Hobson, who is attending one of the servants, and who sometimes comes in to see Miss Ricketts at this time. I saw, sure enough, a gentleman about his height and make, walking up to the house, so I brought him in, and up here without looking at him. He was all muffled up in his cloak, and I didn't even give him time to know where he was, and what I was doing. I shewed him in here, not knowing Miss Agnes was in the room, whilst I went to look for her, and tell Miss Ricketts."

"A pretty likely story!—but no doubt Mr. Hobson's company would suit you or Miss Agnes's taste exactly. Ill, indeed!—and you presuming to take upon yourself the care of my daughter's health! What business have you here at all? I will find some other means of curing her, than by sending for that jackanapes

of an apothecary. This affair shall be sifted to the bottom—this den of meanness and deceit, with all its useless lumber, cleared out,” she added, glancing at the unfortunate governess who had come forth, vainly endeavouring, with her feeble voice, to add her meed of indignation and scolding. “And as for you, Miss Agnes—your light head shall be steadied, trust me. Your brother shall soon be with you.”

“Oh, no—no, pray !” gasped Agnes in sudden return of terror ; for there was something in her brother which exercised a greater power over her mind, than even the violence of her mother—something in the calm glassy expression of his cold light-blue eye, when angry, before which she quailed, more than before the dark furious glare of her mother’s black orbs. She felt as if her secret were as good as revealed, and Gerald lost to her for ever !

With violence which cast her to the ground,

Agnes was flung into the closet where she slept—the key turned upon her, then withdrawn—and the miserable girl left alone, stunned and almost fainting.

CHAPTER XII.

“ Warriors and statesmen have their meed of praise,
And what they do or suffer, men record ;
But the long sacrifice of woman’s days
Passes without a thought, without a word.”

Mrs. Norton.

“ Patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest.”

King Lear.

LADY RACHEL paused before the door of the room, where Alick still impatiently remained, and requested him to follow her.

With her ruffled plumes smoothed in a degree, she conducted him in silence to the other

part of the mansion—till arrived at the library, her Ladyship requested him to enter, till she could ascertain if Mrs. Beauchamp were prepared to receive his most unexpected visit; and having thus rid herself of the incumbrance, towards whom she had been surprised into something more approaching to civility than was her natural wont, her Ladyship again rallied her powers of wrath, and proceeded to the drawing-room. She entered there, upon a very different scene to that of her late performance. A profound silence reigned in the apartment, which, though as being appropriated to common use, was one of the smallest of the sitting-rooms, was still stately and grand, both from its size and style of furniture; whilst the bright lamp, condensed upon the portion of the chamber occupied, left the rest in partial gloom and obscurity.

At a table rather uncomfortably removed from the fire, sat the two Miss Beauchamps, working, or rather resting from their monoto-

nous labours during the temporary relief afforded them by their mother's absence; whilst a luxurious damask cushioned couch, as commodiously situated as to warmth, held their two companions, Mr. Beauchamp and his wife the former hending over his newspaper, whilst the pale light of the shaded lamp on the little table by the sofa, fell upon the countenance of Lena.

The reflection perhaps greatly contributed to the almost transparent delicacy her features seemed to bear—the almost unnatural purity of the “scarcely tinted cheek,” shaded by the pale gold drooping hair; and the expression on her countenance, as with patient industry her slight white fingers wove her silken net-work, was meek, but tinctured with sadness, and a dreamy abstracted look of care or painful thought.

“What could her grief be?” a stranger would have exclaimed, viewing her outward circumstances.

But we need not pause to wonder, or to determine the exact thought which at that present moment flitted over her patient mind, for many such evenings must have passed over her head within that chamber—many

“ Bendings o’er thy braided flowers
With spirit far away.”

many sick yearnings

“ Under the willows of the stranger shore,”

for kindred faces—sad, dim regrets for joys scarce known—sweet looks half forgotten!

And were her thoughts to-night thus occupied, or was her timid spirit drooping beneath a different burden?—

“ Busied with dark imaginings, and drinking
Th’ anticipated cup of grief and pain!”

For in a month or so, Lena’s second infant was to be born.

But why pause to analyze the “ silent sorrows ” of a woman’s heart—sorrows borne by so many, and still to be borne till the world passes away—unnoticed—disregarded! *They* swell no minstrel’s strain—no recording page. The ready smile of patience and submission has but to chase the passing weight of care and pain and grief! in which she allows herself to indulge, and her struggles pass away unknown or unheeded—her troubles scorned as trivial burdens, unworthy of regard. “ God only and good angels know,” and weigh aright their trial cup of woe.

But though Lena looked so sad this night, she was not always thus mournful and dejected. No!—either she was too young and innocent for deceiving hope to withdraw its buoying power from her soul, or else the self-forgetting amiability of her mind and temper was the natural support and stimulus of her spirit; for those around her had little self-reproach

awakened on her score, save that their own consciences would supply. Patient, quiet cheerfulness, equal placidity of temper, a graceful, natural exertion to promote, as far as lay in her power, the pleasure and comfort of all around her, from the highest to the lowest—

“ Were fixed shadows in her fixed mood.”

Should not this gentle virtue work its own reward? It should—and in the end it ever does—if not on earth—in Heaven! but as those of the flesh persecuted those of the spirit, so does selfishness only too often take advantage of, and presume over, attributes of a contrary description. Thus, like a child, who, because he may hear the joylike song of his imprisoned bird, shuts closer the door of its cage, glorying the more over the *enjoyment* of his victim, so often “ those are counted happy that endure ; ” and Lena’s conduct, which should have vanquished

and subdued by its influence the heart of her husband, only tended to pervert, blind, and nourish still more, his selfish, self-absorbed perception.

Like the child—*he* had decked his bird's cage with flowers, and cared not to question whether she pined for other joys—to ask if the song she sometimes sung might not pour forth *her* own feelings too well:—

“ The bird will breathe her silver note,
Though bondage binds her wing;
But is her song a happy one?—
I'm saddest when I sing!”

But we have left Lady Rachel very long making her way to the drawing-room, to change, by her entrance and the sight of her lowering brows, the aspect of the scene within, as the dark threatening thunder-cloud transforms the quiet landscape.

Rachel and Amelia especially, conscience-stricken, and long suspicious of the ominous

absence of their mother, trembled, with some pretty clear ideas of what the sight betokened. Mr. Beauchamp looked up with a cold glance of enquiry, whilst Lena, but too used to scenes such as now seemed threatening, merely drooped her head resignedly, to await like some prescient flower, the passing over of the tempest.

But how quickly did she raise it—with what startled eagerness—when through the passionate outburst of Lady Rachel's lips, the enraged mother made known to Lena's astonished and scarcely crediting ears, that a brother was in the house. The strange story to which this announcement formed but a part, was as nothing to her—that he was there was quite enough—how he came, she cared not.

Lena arose with the intention of immediately seeking him.

“Stay, Lena; I should first like to hear more of this unaccountable story!” her husband

said; "this extraordinary arrival and entrance of your brother."

And poor Lena had to wait and listen to the puzzling history of the furious Lady Rachel—of Agnes having been found clinging to her brother's cloak—his explanation—Agnes's self-accusation—her Ladyship's invectives and assertions against her other daughters—met with denials from them—before her earnest entreaties were attended to, and Mr. Beauchamp promising his mother to return to talk over the affair, somewhat sullenly and reluctantly prepared to conduct her himself to the library.

As coldly as was consistent with civility, he listened to the explanation which, after his first earnest, tender greeting with his sister, Alick thought proper to give of his appearance at the Towers—his desire to carry to his parents some *personal* account of their daughter. On his other adventure he but slightly touched, merely mentioning as it a mistake which had occurred.

Mr. Beauchamp did not press the matter further ; indeed it seemed to be his wish to have as few words as possible with his *wife's relation* ; and merely remarking, with a freezing supercilious smile, that he trusted Mr. Cameron would find no very distressing materials for his desired report, retired.

As may be imagined, the subject uppermost in Alick's mind at that moment was the discovery so curiously made by him, concerning Gerald, and that, forgetful or inattentive to the parting injunction he had received to maintain silence with regard to his movements, his first impulse would be to impart the whole matter to his sister, before many minutes had elapsed of their agitated interview. Poor Lena ! with what dismay she listened to his revelations—at first thunderstruck—then, with earnest agitation, entreating her brother to fly and prevent Gerald from attempting to carry a rash design into execution, which must injure them all so greatly ; if it were possible that it

could *really* have been planned. But how—when ! was to her a most complete mystery—it seemed almost an impossibility.

Alick assured her that it was his intention to do so—and calmed and reassured Lena in a degree; for he wished not to lose the chief purpose of his visit, namely, to gain some particular and satisfactory information concerning her own self.

“Indeed, Lena !” he said, with an anxious tender smile, gazing into her face; “indeed, I feel but too much inclined to carry *you* off with me to Ireland.”

There was something in this speech, which overcame Lena’s feelings, for tears gushed from her eyes.

“Lena !” the young man continued, in an agitated tone, pressing her hands in his, after a moment’s pause, “my darling, sweetest Lena, if I thought you were not happy here—that the constraint which seems to surround you, and keeps you from free communication with those

you love, made you miserable—by Heaven! I would not scruple to take you home—if not by fair means, by force or fraud. Nay, Lena, do not look so shocked or frightened—we will not allow your heart to be broken; you shall come home if the cursed tyranny of these people makes you wretched.”

“Alick, dear Alick, is it you who speaks thus? my calm—good, wise brother!” Lena answered, with a surprised mild expression; “I should have thought it was my impetuous, thoughtless Gerald, who uttered such things. To run away with a young lady from her home is bad enough, but to think it possible that a young married woman—a wife, a mother—could run away from her husband; oh, for shame Alick!” and she tried to smile a playful reproach.

“But why will they not let you visit your family? why is our intercourse with you so restricted? Do you not wish for our society, Lena? Oh, I am sure you do; I know you

too well. I know that it is a trial you must feel most bitterly ; far more than were you ill-treated—persecuted in any other way. I know well,” he continued, in a hurried manner, his feelings almost overwhelming him ; “ I know that all this senseless grandeur cannot make up for the total loss of our society.”

“ No, Alick !” Lena answered, weeping, “ I own there is much truth in what you say—but yet, dear brother, you must not speak so to me ; I must not hear it. It would be very wrong—Mr. Beauchamp loved me, and married me, and is very generous in giving me all he thinks necessary for my happiness ; I ought not to expect to be without my share of trials and cares—to be as happy, Alick, as I was in my own dear home. I must bear it all with patience—these trials peculiar to the state and circumstances in which I am placed ! all I can do is to hope for brighter days—I mean, for days which shall be made bright by more frequent enjoyment of all those I so dearly love—that would indeed make them

bright! My darling father, my dear beautiful mother—and all my brothers and sisters! How long it indeed seems, since I have seen them! And the sweet younger ones—my own pet, Cecil. *I* almost forget what his merry face is like.”

The brother was subdued as if an angel had spoken, but it was only with sadder reverence that he looked upon his sweet sister, and thought how her half-formed, gentle character, which in the sunshine and soft shade of her happy sorrowless home, appeared

“As a flower with some fine sense imbued,
To shrink before the wind’s vicissitudes—”

to quail at the very sound or name of grief, had “risen with the rising storm” into the beauty and meek strength of woman’s devotedness and self-sacrifice.

The pleasure of this interview was certainly marred by the anxiety and care troubling the minds of each—especially Lena.

Alick promised her, that she should have her mind relieved on the subject by seeing or hearing from him early on the morrow. In the mean time she was convinced that at least till the story was more confirmed, it would be injudicious to raise alarm and excite suspicions on the subject. She therefore retired to rest with the concealment weighing heavily on her mind.

Her husband had not, however, exposed her to much agitation by pressing her on the particulars connected with her brother's visit. She had shewn him the kind affectionate letter from the Duchess, which referred to the purpose of Alick's visit; and this perhaps in a measure deterred him from invidious remarks, and even induced him to vouchsafe to say, that Alick and Mr. Sackville had better have slept at the Towers, as they would have found there, more commodious lodgings, he would have imagined, than at the village inn.

Mr. Beauchamp but slightly alluded to the business concerning Agnes—then inveighing

with some ill-humour on the trouble and annoyance he was so constantly undergoing, from the squabbles of his sisters with their mother, and expressing his determination that some severe and decisive measure should be taken on the morrow, to bring Agnes to reason. He did not seem to attach any serious meaning to the story of the mistake, though he seemed provoked that such a scene should have been enacted before a stranger; and at any rate, he had refused to trouble himself by any sifting measures till the morning.

And Agnes—she was supposed to be locked up for the night, safe, and undisturbed in her dark cell; the key of which had been thrown by Lady Rachel at the feet of Miss Ricketts, with the imperative command, that the door should not be opened, till she so ordered it.

The unfortunate governess picked it up, and laid it on the schoolroom table, whilst she retired to put on her flannel dressing-gown and night-cap; in that time Jane Pratt, on re-

moving the gruel cup, substituted another key in the place of the original, which Miss Ricketts, on her return to the apartment, carried with her to her couch, satisfied that the late disturbance had at any rate frightened the play-room revellers from their usual haunt, for all was quiet and in darkness. Her sleep through the night, poor creature! was broken by restless, wakeful starts, and still she thought she was dreaming, when the candle of the school-room maid awoke her to the light, or rather darkness, of another day; and not till shakes, and screams in the ear left her without possibility of believing it to be a waking certainty, could she be brought to think it aught but a wild dream which told her, that "Miss Agnes was not in bed—not with her sisters—not anywhere; her door had been found open, and the room empty."

Then, indeed, the poor woman made haste to arise, felt for the key, and with it in her hand, like a risen ghost, hurried to her pupil's

door. Open indeed it was, and the bird flown.

Into the sisters' room she rushed—shook and—questioned them as they sat up in bed—Rachel with pale but somewhat suspicious composure, Amelia exclaiming, with forced agitation—

“ Goodness! gracious! what can have become of her? How very odd—how very strange!”

Then bells were rung, and the alarm spread amongst the servants, speedily reaching the higher regions.

Lady Rachel soon stood at her son's bedside; with a voice of thunder roaring the astounding news into the ears of the bewildered pair; and Mr. Beauchamp had soon accompanied his mother to the scene of action.

Lena, too, had arisen: but the consummation of the dire suspicion which had been excited in Alick and herself—the distress of mind caused by the idea of the blame which

such knowledge might attach to her; more than all, the terrible certainty of the further breach which her brother's offence must necessarily interpose between herself and her family—all these anxious, miserable feelings, affected her so powerfully, that when her maid came, in the midst of the general confusion, to see after her own poor young mistress, she found her in a state which, considering her situation, was not a little dangerous. Indeed, Lena soon became so ill, that the servant deemed it necessary to send a message to Mr. Beauchamp, requesting that medical advice might be summoned. In short, it ended, that in the noontide hour Mr. Beauchamp was awaiting in deep anxiety the safety of his beloved wife, whose premature confinement was hourly expected, instead of attending to the passionate commands of his mother, that he should put four horses to the carriage, and fly in pursuit of “the” We will not expose her Ladyship by adding a list of all the

anathematizing epithets she bestowed on her fugitive daughter.

However, in the mean time, an interview had taken place between Lady Rachel and Alick.

The latter had contented himself with allowing matters to rest as they were for the night, being at least satisfied that there was no reason to apprehend any immediate *escapade* on the part of his mad brother; with whom he was as nearly quarrelling, in the conference they had together on the subject (for meddling with a man's love affairs is like touching sharp-edged tools) as ever he had been in his life. Sackville also informed him, that Gerald had, from the first moment of meeting his brother, given up the plan of taking any measures that night—indeed, had confided to him the whole affair, in order that he might withdraw Alick from the scene of action without fail on the morrow; so that no member of his family should be implicated in the events

that would ensue. Well! the next morning proved to Alick, that his brother had outwitted him, and to repair to the Towers was his immediate impulse.

It was now both his duty to reveal all he knew of the affair, and to relieve Lena from the weight of responsibility which might press upon her mind.

He had then an interview with the incensed Lady Rachel and Mr. Beauchamp. In it, he revealed, truthfully and regretfully, how the matter stood, and offered to be of any service. The young man met, with such calm dignity and sensible indulgence, the storm of Lady Rachel's rage, and the cold insulting suspicion of her son, that both were finally, against their will, disarmed; and Mr. Beauchamp and Alick were even together entering upon some arrangement as to the measures to be taken in the business, when Lena's illness called her husband away, and turned all his thoughts and interest into another and all-absorbing channel.

Lady Rachel, when forsaken by her son, and the first effervescence of frantic eagerness to recover the fugitives had in a degree subsided, arrogantly rejected the proffers of aid which Alick, with almost equal haughtiness, offered; and left him, in order to devise some more dignified and surer plan of wreaking her wrath and vengeance on the offenders, than any means dependent on a pursuit almost inevitably ineffectual. It was not for Alick, then, to feel any further responsibility in the affair. A sister in the case might have been different—though even then he would have deemed it but a useless form, better dispensed with under similar circumstances.

What satisfaction or desirable end could ensue from even the success of such a mission? To bring back the struggling fugitive with tarnished plumes and broken wing must be but sorry reparation for the injury done to a fair name, and the feelings of friends; but to chase a runaway brother would have been ri-

diculous—one, too, so much a “part and parcel of himself” as Gerald was ever considered by his affectionate brother Alick.

So only waiting to hear of the safety of Lena, and the birth of another *daughter!* early that afternoon, he deemed his only course now was to proceed without further loss of time, to carry his strange and surprising news to the family in Ireland.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ ‘ Be silent—be silent ’—she tremblingly said,

‘ Or you’ll wake our lady-mother !’

“ And soon

The youth in his stout arms caught her ;

‘ Away !’ he cried, ‘ by the light of the moon ;

Away ! Benedicite Daughter !’ ”

Haynes Bayley.

“ I am free—I am free—I return no more !

The weary time of the cage is o’er ;

Through the rolling clouds I can soar on high—

The sky is around me—the blue bright sky !”

Mrs. Hemans.

AND now, young lady readers, open your ears, and prepare for a full, true, and particular account of the “ elopement in high life of Miss

Agnes Beauchamp, youngest daughter of Lady Rachel Beauchamp, and niece to the Marquis of ———, with Lieutenant Gerald Cameron, of the ——— Light Infantry (*not even a gallant Hussar or Life-guardsman*), son of General Cameron, now commanding the garrison of Athlone, in Ireland.”

As a *dédommagement* for the troublesome delay which, what with our lecturing and the real facts, have suspended for so lengthened a period the *piquant* enjoyment of an account so dwelt upon and prized by the gossip and newsmonger—to make our peace with our fair readers, we now promise that they shall hear more than is afforded to many eager perusers of the “Morning Post” and “Court Journal”—that they shall be able to follow the affair through its whole course.

Gerald Cameron had no intention of repairing, like his companions, to the small white dimity couch prepared for him at the inn.

A note had been slipped into his hand from

Jane Pratt, by her fellow-helper, William the footman, as he stood at the inn door, apart from Sackville, some time before Alick's return. Having hastily perused the same, and given a significant nod and an "all's right" in token of his answer, William touched his hat satisfied, and decamped.

It was near the midnight hour when Gerald sallied down stairs, and summoning the landlord, asked for the immediate use of a horse and gig.

The man looked surprised at this demand, but bowed obsequiously, and called the hostler to harness the thorough-bred old hunter (that had belonged to poor Master Alfred) to his own light gig for the gentleman.

The request, though sounding strange at that hour, was irresistible from a friend of the Towers folk, "and such a gentleman too!"

"How far, Sir?" he asked, as Gerald stood strapping up his portmanteau in the courtyard, where he had brought it.

“Oh, not far—if you will have four posters and a chaise ready in half an hour.”

The man stared—scraped his foot, and hesitated.

“Mind they’re ready—that’s all! Come, that will do, my man;” and Gerald, seizing the reins from the hostler, sprang into his vehicle, and saying hastily, “That may be put in!” pointing to his valise, left on the ground, drove off.

Bidding the old porter, as he passed through the lodge gates, not to shut up shop, for he was coming back in a few moments, Gerald drove more slowly half way down the Park: there he stopped.

Meanwhile, in the interior of the mansion, between the hours of ten and twelve that night, Agnes, with a pale frightened face, might have been seen to start from her bed; to which—after having lain for some time on the floor, in a state of despondency and despair—she had dragged her limbs, stiffened with cold and the

fall, and on which she had thrown herself, still dressed. From this state of wretchedness she had been aroused by the sight of Jane Pratt's friendly face, who, with a candle in her hand and finger to her lip, approached the bed, and began a whispered discourse, which was the cause of Agnes rising, and fixing her bewildered eyes on Jane, who was hastily forming a small bundle of clothes; and then she suffered her bonnet to be put on her head, and a cloak thrown over her slight figure.

Finally—cautiously, gently, like mice, they crept through the passages—down the staircase—Jane's flickering candle alone lighting them through the dense darkness. Every creak of the floor was agony—terror indescribable—in the profound silence which it broke.

But they were safe down stairs—through the vault-like passages; the whole route by which Alick Cameron had been led the night before—into the very scullery—yes *scullery*, however unromantic it may sound!

We have promised the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and we are 'sorry we have no more poetic spot than the scullery window to record, for our fair eloper's point of egress. It however served the purpose perfectly well. And soon Agnes stood without, breathing the cold air with as much enjoyment, as if it had been the balmy breezes of Araby, instead of the freezing atmosphere of a January midnight—for it was the breath of liberty!

Then, quickly proceeding from the house through the courtyard gate, a gig they saw approaching to meet them. In another moment the lovers were seated side by side, and Jane Pratt was left standing far behind.

Gerald, ere setting off, had stooped down, and pressed a bank note into her hand, but she had pushed it back, with a murmur of—

“Take care of Miss Agnes!”

Off whirled the gig over the crisp hard ground, disappearing, and reappearing at in-

tervals, for a little time, between the dark trees; and then it was quite out of sight. Jane put her hand to her eyes, and turned back.

But we must follow the runaways. What were the lovers saying?

The hurry and flurry of starting, had cut short any very demonstrative emotion at first meeting; but Gerald, when he had finally settled his horse into a pace suitable to his impatient spirit, bent forward with a tender, and perhaps no little curious desire, to look into the face, which, considering he had been parted from it for two long years, and last beheld it on the very day he had begun to gaze upon it with any peculiar interest—could not be stamped upon his remembrance with any great vividness.

The survey was not unsatisfactory; for though it could not give him, by reason of the darkness, any very distinct and particular view of the countenance of his gentle, silent

companion, he perceived that she was weeping ; —and from whatever cause the emotion sprang, its feminine nature rendered it far from ill-pleasing to his feelings, and made a more agreeable impression on his heart—so peculiarly sensitive on the score of female delicacy—than a bolder manner of carrying out the scheme in which she had embarked, could have effected. Perhaps this demonstration of feminine sensibility relieved his mind of those misgivings which can scarcely fail in some degree to disturb the spirit of the man—unless *eperdument amoureux* with respect to the girl who has thus consented clandestinely to fly with him. Tenderly, earnestly, did he then pour soft soothing encouragement into her ear, which was indeed truly reviving to the spirit of the recipient. Straight into the stable-yard they drove. A chaise was there, but no posters harnessed. The landlord and hostler were, however, in attendance.

“Hollo ! not ready !” Gerald exclaimed, in

smothered accents of impatience. "How is this?"

The landlord approached the gig cautiously and suspiciously, and held the light up towards the female occupant.

"Because, Sir, I was afeard as how all was not right," the man said, respectfully, but firmly, shaking his head.

"Come, Sir, don't get into a passion," he continued, smiling, for Gerald snatched a pistol from under his cloak, in threatening defiance; "I'm not going to burn my fingers in the business, one way or the other. I lent you my gig in ignorance, so you must e'en keep it, I suppose, and use it, if it is your pleasure so to do; but as for harnessing for you my posters to run off with one of the young ladies from the Towers—I can't do it—it would be my ruin. Why, Sir, a young soldier gentleman like you, if I guess aright, might never be wanting such a thing again as four horses, till the day of your burial—wedding day—and

funeral day!—but Lady Rachel and the squire—why, they never stir a mile without them—so——”

“Well, that’s enough, wise old Solomon; keep your posters to yourself, and welcome. Hostler, up with my portmanteau!” The hostler, grinning, obeyed.

“This hunter of yours is a capital fellow,” Gerald continued; “send for him to-morrow, to ——, if you like. And now go off to bed, and hold your tongue, or I’ll come back and shoot you and your horse together, on the spot.”

Out of the yard he turned, and in another moment had put the horse to a swifter pace than the posters could have accomplished, along the high road; informing his companion, at the same time, lest she should feel any anxiety as to their plans, that they would be at ——, the next post town, in little more than an hour, and quite soon enough to manage the

remaining eight miles from the railroad station, to catch the night train.

“How delightful, how delightful!” was all Agnes could answer in accents of full content, with which her heart was now overflowing—not only because awakened, and disenchanted from her first bewilderment, to an appreciation of the merits of her case, but because flying as they were, at such lightning speed, through the fresh clear air, in the high light vehicle—was of itself, enough to produce upon the inexperienced senses of the young girl, a wonderfully inspiring, exhilarating, even intoxicating effect. And when Gerald, too, catching the influence, cast away all sober fear and anxiety, and as they dashed along, lifted up his voice, and sang forth bold snatches of song,

“Tramp—splash—tramp—
Who fears to ride with me?”

her laugh mingled in the strain—musical, wild,

and gleeful, as the notes of the disimprisoned bird, once more soaring in the sky.

Sure, never were the inmates of the ——— inn called upon to serve two madder customers than the young couple who stood before the door, having alighted from the gig—the one calling, or rather storming for post chaise and horses—giving orders and directions for the keep and tender care of the good chesnut, who, though panting, smoking, was not yet quite subdued in spirit—the other in the large inn kitchen—where she was invited by an old woman, who came down to enquire if beds were wanted—skipping and dancing about, like one demented, before the astonished eyes of the chambermaid and her aforesaid mistress; telling them she was going to Gretna-green to be married—and laughing careless scornful merriment at the grave shakings of the old woman's head and still graver words—

“For shame—for shame, young lady! Go back to your friends!”

“ Friends!—FRIENDS!—my best friend is outside the door. No better or kinder friend have I at home, I can assure you, good woman.”

And out again was she at the door, to look for Gerald, who in a few minutes more had hurried her into the chaise, sprung in after her, and they were again *en route*.

We write all these details, and yet, whilst thus employed, some disagreeable painful feeling seems as it were to bid us stop, and pass over as quickly as possible this part of our story.

And why? Ah! because, though this fiction may tell of youthful wildness, and may be deemed all harmless sport, we cannot but feel it is such like acts which are changing the peace and joy of many an English home into bitter distress, disappointment, and shame—scattering, as it were, “firebrands, arrows, and death,” into the trusting, loving hearts of parents and friends.

We have no call for any such sympathy in the fictitious case before us. We have already said that Agnes can scarcely form a precedent. But so many are the facts and realities of the same nature passing around us, that whilst detailing these passages of our story, we cannot but feel deeply for the many wounded hearts writhing in bitter mortification and sorrow, and feeling but too truly—

“How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child !”

But to continue, yet not minutely, for we are silenced and grieved at such things!—The eight miles’ drive was quickly over. During its continuance we will suppose Agnes to have poured into the ear of her lover her joy and gratitude for her deliverance—her tale of trial, grief, and agony—for when at length, in safety, they had exchanged the speed of horses’ feet for unromantic steam, she was quite exhausted and subdued—leaning back in the

coupé in a state of just heavenly consciousness; broken only when, having lost herself in sleep for a moment, she started with her eyes opened wide in bewilderment, to be again recalled to paradise by the pressure of her hand in Gerald's—by the vision of those dark-blue smiling eyes which bent down with anxious kindness upon her.

And Gerald—his leisure for reflection—his reduction to inaction—brought with it probably some sobering effect on his spirits also—to judge by the serious, earnest thoughtfulness which gathered ever and anon over his handsome countenance. He now began rightly to feel and understand what he was about. But that comprehension, though it might be rendering him a “sadder and a wiser man,” was working in no way to the disadvantage of Agnes—for it might have been evidenced in the growing earnestness of the frequent affectionate glances in which her spirit was rejoicing.

Well—we have not patience to accompany

them further; but our readers will doubtless easily excuse us.

Gretna and its mysteries have become too common, too every day a tale, for romance. We shall therefore only add, that the *blacksmith par excellence* had *forged* the hymeneal chain round the young couple one good day at least before the clerical brother of the bride could attend to the imperative and astounding mandate of his lady mother, to fly in pursuit, and bring his sister back—if *unmarried*. If *married*, to let her alone—in that case, Lady Rachel renounced her and her concerns *for ever*; and though hopeless of effecting the former direction—for the purpose of finding, and taking the offending couple under his authority, for the proper celebration of their marriage, he set off without delay.

Mr. Ralph Beauchamp traced them to Liverpool—there to find, that the preceding morning they had embarked for Ireland.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Speak gently to the young, for they
Will have enough to bear ;
Pass through this world as best they may,
’Tis full of anxious care !

“ Speak gently to the erring—know
They must have toiled in vain ;
Perchance unkindness made them so—
Oh ! win them back again.”

Anon.

A VERY sensible change had taken place in the spirits and deportment of Gerald’s bride as they drew near Athlone. The wild exhilaration—which, soon after we left her, had again burst forth, and continued unabated during

the rest of the expedition, to a pitch almost oppressing and terrifying to her companion—drooped as suddenly as it had risen, and called for all his soothing influence to subdue her fear and trembling. The fact was, that the parental relationship having been rendered one of such a bugbear nature to poor Agnes, it was difficult to dispel the idea which began to fill her excited imagination, as to what they were to expect on arriving at her husband's home.

True, Gerald bade her only remember what his parents were—how kind she had always found them—and in warm, glowing colours, expatiated on their never-varying affection and indulgence under every circumstance of his life. Still, harshness and unkindness would haunt her fancy, as the only shape which a father, or at least a mother, could assume towards her, more especially under existing circumstances; and clinging to Gerald even as they reached the General's door, she implored him to shield and protect her—not to let them

separate her from him, or give her up again to her mother's power.

Gerald, not a little nervous and agitated—though from feelings of a different nature—had to repeat, over and over again, the most tender assurances and persuasions, to calm her sufficiently to induce her to alight, restored to anything like composure.

It was Alick who first met them — Alick, who had only preceded them one day, with the strange and startling intelligence; from the surprise and consternation of which, as may be supposed, the General and his wife had scarcely recovered, when thus called upon suddenly and unexpectedly to receive the young adventurers.

Little prepared for such a juncture, and aware that becoming manifestations of condemnation and displeasure must strongly mark their first reception, the brothers and sisters were forbidden to fly as usual to greet and welcome the new-comers; and the parents

themselves awaited, with as much grave dignity as they could command, the entrance of the culprits, whom Alick had been despatched to conduct to their presence.

They entered—Agnes's slight drooping form supported by Gerald's strong arm.

There was an instant's awful silence. No eager joyful demonstrations of welcome met their ear. Gerald looked round from one to the other, hurt, chafed, and angry at a reception which the ever indulged son and brother was little prepared to expect or endure; whilst Agnes shrunk back, as if she could have sunk into the earth.

But the scene had soon changed. Gerald was not the only one who found such conduct hard and unnatural. That instant's silence was followed by hesitating, entreating glances between parents and children — half frowns, glistening, tearful frowns — and then one rose, and then another, till, with one general rush, accompanied by a shout from little

Cecil, Gerald was encircled by an eager band, and the first arms in which he found himself pressed were his mother's!

"Come, come, this is too bad!" chimed in at length the General's kind, pleasant voice, in which a slight attempt at the commanding officer was perceptible. "If you will be so injudicious in your treatment of ill-conduct, at least be just, and not quite leave out of your consideration the fellow-culprit." And he led forward, with grave but gentle kindness, the shrinking girl, who, while the striking scene had been enacting before her eyes, had stood, scarcely knowing whether to laugh or to cry, separated from Gerald by the numerous group.

She now suffered herself to be brought forward—at the same time looking up into the General's face with such a piteous, beseeching expression, that his kind heart melted. He clasped her in his arms, soothed her with kind encouraging words, as he would have done one of his own daughters, then led the

trembling girl to Mrs. Cameron, who embraced her with a feeling of interest at least, if not with the same pitying indulgence felt by her husband.

There is always, more or less, some slight feeling of suspicious jealousy inherent in a mother's heart towards the wife of a much-prized son. And in this case, and under such peculiar circumstances, the uncertainty as to the extent of good or evil Gerald had drawn upon himself and family by the affair in which she had entangled them all, rendered it but natural that the character of Mrs. Cameron's sentiments towards her daughter-in-law should be somewhat dubious.

But the embrace and smile seemed kindness and warmth themselves to Agnes. Her friend Annie also approached to greet her—the rest of the party pressing forward with curiosity and interest to look at Gerald's runaway bidre. Gerald, grateful, and gratified by his parents' bearing towards her, exclaimed—

“ You see, Agnes, you need not have been so terrified at the idea of your reception.”

This speech recalled the General and Mrs. Cameron, to the serious manner in which both principle and natural inclination taught them to regard the circumstances of the case before them.

Recovering from the impulse of kind indulgence which had surprised them into momentary forgetfulness of their duty, their countenances assumed a colder and graver expression; and desiring the rest of the party to leave the room, the father and mother were left alone with the imprudent pair.

The General then, with mild severity, which penetrated deeply into Agnes’ heart, demanded every particular of the extraordinary and much to be lamented step they had so rashly taken.

“ Sit down, Agnes!” Mrs. Cameron said, observing the nervous, trembling condition into which the girl had again fallen. “ You need not be so very much frightened, nor cling

so closely to Gerald," she continued, with a smile she could not suppress; "you are quite safe, and it is too late, I fear, for it to be of much use to scold you very severely."

Gerald placed his bride upon a seat, and began a clear, frank statement of the nature and circumstances of the engagement, thus concluded by the elopement.

It was not a long story, and he told it in very few words, without comment or argument; but the whole statement was summed up with the declaration that he had pitied Agnes, and then loved her—had pledged his honour to obtain her deliverance, and had therefore made it a point of duty, on arriving in England, immediately to redeem that pledge.

With no little confidence, the young man then left his cause to be pleaded by his father's chivalric sense of the "*devoir aux dames*," and by the kind impulses of his mother's warm, enthusiastic heart. And truly in his case—

except on the score of ill-judged rashness—there was little which, in the parents' inward mind, they could very harshly censure. They could not but feel that the chief blame and reproach—as is ever the case under such circumstances, more or less—must be attached to their son's fair companion in the business.

But while they descanted, with sorrow more than anger, on the sad and blameable tissue of deception and concealment into which the affair had plunged Agnes—the improper and indelicate step which it had led her to adopt—they had no wish to spare their son, and severely the General expatiated on the subject.

“Certainly,” he said, as Agnes raised her head, and looked all her horror at the idea of such a mad and hopeless alternative as to have asked Lady Rachel's permission to the marriage; “it might have led to a postponement of the event, but surely self-approbation would in a degree have compensated for the sacrifice; and believe me, Agnes, it is sel-

dom that feelings of a comfortable nature follow such a step as you have taken."

Having in a due manner expressed their condemnation, and endeavoured to impress upon the minds of the young couple, as much conviction of the error of their ways, the conference ended, as it alone could do, by the parents promising to lend their aid—now that the deed was done, and could not be recalled—in doing all in their power in the requisite negotiating with the offended relations.

Upon one point, however, the General and his lady were firm—that Gerald should immediately depart, leaving Agnes with them, until every arrangement was made for their legal marriage, at which event Mrs. Cameron and Alick were present, shortly after. It took place in perfect privacy, in the church at Athlone; and after the ceremony the couple were dismissed for a time into solitary seclusion—"in disgrace!" as Mrs. Cameron took care to impress upon the minds of her curious, won-

dering young daughters, for the offence which the couple (particularly disgraceful in Agnes) had committed—the offence of having married without leave or licence; conduct which, in one of their own daughters, could never be overlooked by either father or mother; a declaration calculated to make indeed a wonderful impression—magnifying the misdemeanour to a most awful extent in the imagination of the two younger girls. It must indeed be a most heinous crime, to be visited in such a dreadful manner! As for Annie and Janet, their mother only expressed her confidence in their sense of duty and affection. She felt that their principles were firmly established.

In the meantime, Mrs. Cameron set herself, with kind diligence, to the unwonted task of superintending the concoction of a respectable wardrobe for her daughter-in-law; who, having arrived nearly destitute of such a convenience, had been forced to borrow from the family till the arrangements now in progress could be

completed—and as Mrs. Gerald Cameron was not accustomed to anything very *recherché* in the way of *toilette*, she was far from particular on the subject.

Poor Mrs. Cameron! this new *daughter*—this fresh accession of care and anxiety which Gerald had drawn upon her—would have weighed less upon her lively and far-seeing mind—the prospect of future advantage secured to her penniless son, by a union with a girl possessing a fortune of thirty thousand pounds, would have counteracted any present inconvenience to which the step might expose the young people; any trouble and annoyance the mother would willingly have endured, had her mind been in a happier, more comfortable state.

But truly it was racked by anxieties. Her poor child Lena! this was the subject which weighed most heavily on her spirits.

Alick had brought the news of her premature confinement, and General and Mrs. Ca-

meron awaited the answer to the intelligence they had despatched to Mr. Beauchamp respecting his sister, with more eager impatience for the tidings it would impart concerning their beloved daughter, than for the answer concerning the direct purport of the letter.

The epistle arrived without delay. On the score of Lena, the communication was coldly and slightly made. She was doing well; but this information only formed the postscript to the announcement forming the principal subject of the letter. His sister, wrote Mr. Beauchamp, had by her conduct incurred the severe and unmitigated displeasure of Lady Rachel and himself—her guardians, both by nature and legal right. She had forfeited all further countenance or assistance from them. Till by law, therefore, she was entitled to claim her fortune, it was their fixed intention to use their privilege of guardians, and to prevent her touching any portion of it.

It was also Lady Rachel's desire that he should communicate her determination never again to behold her offending daughter—his own to decline any further importunity on the part of his sister or her friends. Every overture on her part and theirs would be equally useless, and unnoticed by him.

We cannot say that this sentence affected with much grief or compunction the object of it, when conveyed to her. On the contrary—shocking to relate—the idea of the complete alienation from her mother which it implied, raised her spirits to such an extraordinary pitch, that the Camerons were astounded and horrified.

There was nothing then to be done for the young couple, but to establish them under the parental roof until the time arrived when Gerald's leave of absence should have expired; they must then set off and join his regiment, and do the best they could upon his pay, and the allowance which it was far from conve-

nient to his father to bestow on him; and putting an entire stop to the trip to London which the General had promised to Annie that Spring; for alas! the Duke's health—some said it was his pocket—rendered inevitable the relinquishment of another London season for the continent.

Annie had been invited to accompany them, but her father had objected again to part with her; and in compensation for the amusement and advantage it might have afforded her, proposed taking his family to London for a month or two.

But now the fair Annie, who, in Italy the previous year, had turned so many hot heads, and set on fire so many cold hearts, must be content to vegetate in wild Ireland, “wasting her fragrance” in its turf-scented air. For alas! few Lord Alfreds, or anything approaching to him, in Mrs. Cameron's estimation, again turned up amidst the society of Athlone.

However, Mrs. Cameron behaved with much philosophy, and turned her endeavours, with laudable kindness, to the training into something more promising for her son Gerald's future welfare and happiness, her most inconvenient daughter-in-law.

But it was a very difficult undertaking. Fine fruits, truly, were presented of Lady Rachel's discipline and plan of education!

Agnes was perfectly ignorant of all idea of arrangements as to domestic concerns, in the most limited sense; but being quick-witted and eager to learn every thing new, and forget everything old, there was hope of remedy for that evil. It was in the more requisite property of *self-management* that she was still more deficient, and also in a most lamentable degree.

Gerald spoilt her sadly; and the extreme indulgence and kindness of his parents—indeed the sudden transition of atmosphere—was too much for her weak mind to bear; as soon

as she began to feel at home, to recover from her first shyness, and to be able to appreciate the advantages of her new state of existence, all ballast was found wanting in the materials she possessed, to endure the transformation, or to render it at all beneficial to herself or others.

She presumed upon her young husband's affectionate—prejudicial indulgence, and bid fair to tease him to death. And then, if his parents, perceiving the mistake of imagining that the same treatment would answer for the wild colt, broken loose, as for their own gently nurtured offspring, endeavoured, for Gerald's sake, to practise towards her a kind, gentle, but more firm, judicious mode of training—then she would start aloof from their endeavours, with suspicious resentment and cowardly fear—as the wild colt might wince from the hidden halter.

Still there were natural germs of good in her disposition—interesting points in her cha-

racter, which gave her kind friends more courage and patience in their work of reformation and improvement.

Poor Mrs. Cameron! never, in her most prophetic flights of fancy, had she contemplated such a care being involved upon her, as the one which now weighed so unpleasantly upon her mind—that of having to maintain and to train a flighty, ill-educated *daughter-in-law*.

CHAPTER XV.

“I do remember an apothecary,
And hereabouts he dwells.”

Romeo and Juliet.

“A conqueror is Kindness ; far beyond
The armed victor.——
A gentle word begets a gentle thought ;
Drawing the sting from malice. Better thus,
Than bruise with hate the ignorant serpent’s head,
Who knoweth nothing till you teach it him.”

Barry Cornwall.

FOR several months, succeeding the violent commotion—which, like a storm, had shaken the sturdy old Towers to its base—the household appeared to have settled into a fit of sulkiness as deep and powerful ; dense indeed was the

gloom and stillness, the impenetrable dulness which seemed to reign over its interior.

“ Stillness was there, but not of rest.”

No, on the contrary, there was much underground work in progress. There was nothing partaking of peace, but that sweet spirit which dwelt within the bosom of the young wife and mother, breathing her sad and joyless life, with the same usual patient submission.

Mr. Beauchamp had taken Lena and her babies for some weeks to the seaside, after her recovery—the only break made by any of the inmates of the Towers.

Lady Rachel's fury and wrath after the elopement had not in any degree exhausted itself, till she was laid low by a bilious fever; she had expelled Jane Pratt, on strong suspicion of connivance, from the house, and placed the Miss Beauchamps under severer restrictions and additional the *surveillance* of a former

governess, summoned for the purpose ; all communication with the offices being also cut off by lock and key.

Miss Ricketts only escaped being immediately expelled in the first paroxysm of Lady Rachel's rage, by a severe attack of illness, with which the poor woman was seized, immediately after the shock of her pupil's delinquency.

Amelia, too, became poorly ; so that Mr. Hobson had plenty of occupation at the Towers ; for, being a remarkably clever man in his profession, even Lady Rachel deigned to accept the services of the "jackanapes apothecary," and was too much absorbed by her own ailments to remember to forbid his extending them further.

So matters had continued. Lady Rachel, like a wounded lion, subdued in strength, but only the more sullenly savage on her convalescence, tyrannized with even greater jealous vigilance over all within her influence ; and it

was not decreased by witnessing the ominous composure and apparent unconcern with which her daughters submitted to her inflictions.

The explosion broke out at last.

It was about six months after Agnes's elopement, that Miss Beauchamp entered the private sitting-room of her brother, who was breakfasting with his wife. Rachel was in her walking dress, and looked very pale, with evident marks of emotion on her countenance.

Mr. Beauchamp looked upon her with a cold enquiring gaze; Lena with nervous solicitude.

"I am come, Lionel," said Rachel, in a somewhat hurried, but firm voice, "to announce to you an event which will both astonish and displease you, and also to request you to make the communication to Lady Rachel, who is as yet in ignorance of what has happened this morning, and of what is further to take place."

"Explain yourself, Miss Beauchamp, more

particularly, if you please," answered Mr. Beauchamp; "I think I am now beyond being either surprised or displeased at any thing you can have to reveal to me—although to *conceal* has hitherto certainly been more your forte. Your change of tact may indeed excite some little astonishment in my breast; but you doubtless have your own wise and judicious motives for it."

"My motives are very simple, indeed, brother; necessity and the uselessness—indeed, impossibility—of any concealment in the case. If I have been hitherto to blame for the deceptive course, which has been the consequence of the harshness and unkindness—nay, the tyranny of those who have ruled over us from our infancy—God knows, in this case, I have been sufficiently punished by the pain which its issue has inflicted upon me. Yes, I own," and Rachel threw back her stately head, with a curl as of something like disgust upon her lip—the proud blood mantling her cheek; "I own

it is with no great feeling of satisfaction or pleasure, that I announce to you, Lionel, our sister Amelia's marriage, this morning, with Mr. Hobson, the apothecary."

Mr. Beauchamp sat, for a while, upright upon his chair—aghast—motionless! Lena covered her eyes with her hands, with a faint exclamation of horror and amazement.

The next moment the brother had recovered from his stupefaction—pale with rage he started up, and grasping the arm of Rachel, dared her to repeat the cursed words, that a sister of *his* had disgraced herself—her family, by stooping to wed a low-born village apothecary. And when Rachel declared her inability to deny the assertion, the livid countenance and the imprecations—which, through his teeth were levelled on the offender and the coadjutor in her crime, who he considered was before him in the person of Rachel—were startling and appalling to witness, from a man so self-possessed; and well

might even Rachel quail beneath his convulsed grasp.

Mr. Beauchamp had manifested no such violent symptoms of emotion at Agnes's delinquency. No! because that act had merely skimmed over, scarcely grazed, the touchstone of his heart—*self*. Agnes's misdemeanour was, after all, of a nature to do injury to no one but herself; and therefore it was in the nature of the man, after having done all in his power to make the matter sure, by visiting the offence as severely as possible upon her, to suffer himself to be no further affected by it. But this was quite a different case. His sister Amelia's act of low folly had brought degradation upon *himself*—his family—his *name*, he thought; and the proud selfish man was stung into fury by the galling wounds inflicted upon his *self-love*.

A soft pressure upon his arm—a gentle, timid voice—recalled him a little to recollection.

“Lionel, dear Lionel, be calm, I beseech you,” Lena pleaded, as she stood, pale and trembling, by his side. “Speak gently to Rachel—hear her explanation. It may not be her fault—Amelia’s conduct pains her also.”

No, dear, sweet Lena!” Rachel interrupted; “do not trouble yourself on my account—gentleness and kindness would come too late to be of any service now; they might once have done much, perhaps—or rather, have prevented much of evil—and thus spared many from the mortification which now so strongly affects my brother; nor do I care to exculpate myself from my share of blame in Amelia’s conduct—I am also going to leave this house immediately. Nay, Lionel, for two long years I have been my own mistress—it had always been my intention so to act, shortly after this day, on which poor Amelia has attained her twenty first year—I did not think I should have to leave it thus alone.”

“And may I ask into whose arms Miss Beau-

champ, after kindly disposing of her sisters, intends flying—by what reputable connexion *she* contemplates—she intends, honouring her family? The village attorney—or perhaps the village schoolmaster?” her brother enquired, with the bitterest of sneers.

“I am going to my brother Ralph,” Miss Beauchamp replied, with haughty dignity. “If you have any further desire to be assured of the respectability of my position, you shall hear from the Rectory to that effect, in a day or two. The arrangements for my journey into Sussex are made—Jane Pratt accompanies me. My small effects are now in preparation. I have written to my mother to explain all—the letter will be given to her after my departure. I would not have our last interview of the violent nature it must certainly have proved.”

“And now, my dear Lena,” Rachel continued, after a pause, in which she awaited what

further her brother might have to say; but either stupefied or sullen, he remained pale and silent—"Sweetest Lena, let me kiss you, and bid you farewell!" and she embraced her sister-in-law, with tender emotion. "I need not tell you how I shall ever think of you with deep heartfelt gratitude. Yes, *grateful* I am, Lena. Do not say I have no cause for gratitude towards you, for believe me when I declare, that it is you who have been the means of keeping up any feeling approaching to good or gentle in my nature, by the angelic influence of your meek example—that counteracting influence of patient endurance which I had never before witnessed in our home. And your dear little children—Lena, I must kiss them also before I go. Oh, Lena, I need not, I am sure, urge *you* to endeavour to guard them from the cruel injustice of a harsh education—an unloved, cheerless childhood. And Lionel," she continued, turning with softened feelings to-

wards her brother, "he will take warning, if it be but for his own sake, from the example of his *mother's children*, and train his daughters after the model of his sweet wife."

The brother turned haughtily away from Rachel's proffered hand. Once more she embraced the weeping Lena, and murmured, "God bless you, sweet angel!" with tears starting in her eyes, and emotion struggling in her warm, affectionate heart.

It was with more painful feelings than one, that the spirit of Rachel was oppressed, when she set forth that day from her natural—or rather, as it had been rendered, *most unnatural* home. She had received the galling lesson, the usual result to those who, like her, have forsaken the straight path of truth and honesty, and, against the instinctive dictates of a natural sense of right and wrong, entered upon a course of deception.

Rachel had aided and abetted in deceiving others, and she had been paid in her own coin ; herself deceived and forsaken by her companion and own familiar friend.

For indeed, Amelia's affair with Mr. Hobson had been entered upon unknown and unsanctioned by the sister, upon whose strong mind and judgment she had ever professed to lean with confidence and affection—nay, till the very last moment had Amelia carried it on, leaving Rachel in ignorance of the engagement having been contracted, and suffering her to form plans and purposes for the future, without enlightening her in any way.

The fact was, that Rachel had discouraged and condemned, from a very early stage of the business, the approach towards an intimacy greater than she approved, between the young apothecary and her sister, and had spoken her mind freely on the subject to Amelia ; and on that young lady having confessed that she did

not see what objection there could be to Mr. Hobson, and that she thought him the handsomest, as well as the most agreeable, man she had ever seen, Rachel treated the idea with such high-bred scorn and aversion, that Amelia's lips had been sealed upon the subject ever after, and Rachel felt satisfied that she had shamed her out of the unworthy thoughts which her insinuations had implied.

During the interval of time from this conversation to the present moment, much deep cunning and subtlety must have been practised by Amelia and her lover—for like the effect of a thunderbolt, falling from a serene sky, was the announcement, made to Rachel with much *sang froid* and composure the night before, that arrangements were made for Amelia's marriage the following morning with young Hobson; her sister also requesting her to complete her good and sisterly offices, by lending the support of her countenance at the altar.

To turn Amelia from her purpose, Rachel then saw to be impossible ; to betray her would be, she considered, as treacherous as useless ; for, Amelia her own mistress, could not be deterred by right of authority from following her own inclinations in the matter.

All Rachel's representations to her sister, as to the unsuitability of the match—the degradation from her own rank in life—fell like idle words on the ear of Amelia.

Her mother, she said, had debarred her from all possibility of making a more suitable connexion ; and if she had found some one to marry her in a lower station, it was that mother's own fault. She was sure, however, that she should find it a match quite to her taste. She was sick and weary of the cold grandeur around her, and would be only too happy to find herself peeping over “the green blinds, through the geranium-pots, in Mr. Hobson's new bow-windowed house, at her mother, or any of

the party driving past in their carriage and four."

Miss Beauchamp could scarcely blame her sister for sentiments and conduct, of which her mother's system had too truly been the foundation, in a mind naturally of no very delicate nature; and it finally ended by her yielding to the faithful sisterly pleadings of her heart, and leaving the house at an early hour that morning, and repairing with her to the church; where, with all the wounded pride of the Beauchamps swelling in her breast, and burning in her cheek, Rachel had stood by the altar with a *Miss Hobson*, on the other side, and had seen her sister, with all the noble blood of the Beauchamps and Tremornes flowing in her veins, give her hand to the well-pleased village Galen; for, whatever loss of practice might be the result of his offensive alliance with a daughter of the Towers, the fortune of his nobly connected bride would compensate for it *thirty thousand fold*.

Rachel had not been the only ally against whose approval Amelia had acted. Jane Pratt, who, on being turned from the Towers, had established herself with some friends in the neighbourhood, to await the expected summons to accompany Miss Beauchamp into Sussex, had also refused to lend any assistance in the present step, when it was hinted by Amelia.

“Miss Agnes’s affair had been quite a different case,” she argued; “to help her to wed one of a stock, from which her proud brother himself had deigned to choose a wife—and so noble and handsome a gentleman as Mr. Gerald Cameron—was doing no wrong to herself or the family itself; but to aid and abet one of her young ladies marrying beneath her—it was against her sense either of duty or inclination.”

Jane Pratt had gone to the church to see and arrange with Miss Beauchamp con-

cerning their journey, which the former determined should not be delayed—a day's longer residence at the Towers being now rendered intolerable—and so Rachel Beauchamp departed.

CHAPTER XVI.

“Dearest sister, I
Am one of whom thou doubtless hast much heard,
Not always well. My name too oft pronounced
With sighs, desponding sorrow, and reproach.

Yet deem not hardly of me ; who best know,
Most gently censure me.”

Coleridge.

WE will enter into no further description of the fury of Lady Rachel, who thus, in so short a space of time, found herself as a lioness bereft of her whelps—or a slave master, the victims of whose tyranny and love of power had risen

up — outwitted and laughed him to scorn — shaken off their chains and bondage!

“ Othello’s occupation gone!”

But, no! it is seldom that the tyrant oppressor fails entirely of victims — if some have cast off his yoke, there are to be found other on whom to lay the burden — others to sink in their patient submission to the earth.

Lady Rachel left the Towers for London, shortly after this last catastrophe, not for the purpose of drowning her griefs in the gaities of the season, but to seek the only hope now left for compensating the wrongs she had received.

She had formed an idea, from some wording of the late Mr. Beauchamp’s will, that there was a possibility of tying up the fortunes of the married daughters, so as to prevent them or their husbands, fully benefitting from the possession of them without the sanction of their guardians.

Mr. Beauchamp participated in this idea, and accompanied his mother to London, in order to consult with the lawyers upon the subject.

Thus was Lena, for a few days, left to the unusual enjoyment of something like freedom, if enjoyment it could be called; for alas! freedom under circumstances like hers, only sets the heart at liberty, to range at wide through a world of sad thoughts, and to plunge into thick shades of gloom and darkness. Lena's sensitive heart had been much affected by the late events. The dropping off one by one of her sisters-in-law, by such strange and striking events, had made a deep impression on her feelings.

Not only did she feel—though she had profited little by their proximity—the void and blank which their desertion had occasioned—that there were still fewer warm hearts around her, (for Rachel's had proved to her a very warm one,) but it was to her a wretched, un-

natural idea, that her husband must now be divided in body and spirit from each member of his family—brothers and sisters—one now belonging to her own family—each at variance with him !

Could she, with these feelings at her heart, joy much in her short-lived liberty to look, speak and move, at her pleasure ?

Her husband must, indeed—considering the jealousy of his disposition—have acquired great confidence in his young wife, thus to have persuaded himself to leave her at all, after the startling instances, by which his home had been shaken.

But Lena could not suppress a faint, sad smile, as she listened to the minute directions he gave her concerning her movements during his absence, and the injunctions she found to have been imposed upon poor old Ricketts to be her constant companion.

“Does he fear that I shall run away ?” she thought ; and remembering Alick’s words, a

tear dimmed her eye, and she inwardly murmured, with a sigh, "Ah, he need not fear—all those are far away, who care to see *me*."

It must have been a strange change to Miss Ricketts, from her old post, to the office of guardian over the gentle, lovely being, who treated her with such gentle, amiable consideration.

For Lena, though she could not bring herself to experience any very tender or agreeable feelings towards the repellant and harsh instructress, who had rendered miserable the youthful days of her sisters-in-law—still, in spite of this feeling, was unable to help pitying the unloved friendless being, who, after all, might have been more the slave of Lady Rachel's will than her own natural inclinations; and who now, with health broken and occupation gone, could not even look or hope for that reward and consolation which those in her situation so often receive, if only in the remembrance of the kindly feelings which subsisted between the governess and pupil.

Such reward she must not expect—rather curses, not loud, but deep; contempt and dislike, from those on whom she had spent her strength—had sacrificed so many years of her existence. Lena, to further her husband's wishes, and facilitate the poor creature's execution of them, invited her—though little conversation took place between them—to sit where she sat, and walk where she walked; for Miss Ricketts was well enough now to crawl about the grounds a little, and Lena felt no inclination to overpass their bounds.

There she would fall in with the nurses and children, and even presume—now she had no companion to keep her arm in his, and deem it an offence if she ventured to withdraw it—to carry her baby a short distance, or order the little struggling Rachel to be released, and suffer the child to toddle by her side, holding by her dress.

“I wonder she is so fond of me,” Mrs. Beauchamp said one day, in speaking of the

little girl, to the baby's nurse, a respectful, kind-looking young woman, who, in contrast to the established head-lady of the nursery, seemed to take a pleasure in forwarding what she considered the young mother's due enjoyment of her own children ; "I am sure I have seen but little of the darling. I wonder she even knows that I am her mother," and tears were in her eyes.

"I am sure, madam, you seem very fond of your children," the woman said, in a tone which caused Lena to exclaim, with some quickness, as she turned with heightened colour towards the woman—

"Fond! had you any doubt of that, Mrs. Brown?"

"Oh, no, madam! I beg your pardon—but not nursing your babies, and seeing so little of them! I am sure it's no fault of yours, madam—but most fine ladies get the name of not caring for their children when they are so young, like."

“You are quite right, it is not surprising that such should be the idea,” answered the poor young mother, with a smothered sigh; “and indeed it is a bitter pang, to feel that all pleasure and interest in my children should be so circumscribed. “Oh! Brown, I envy you,” she said, with a sad smile, “and would willingly change places with you. What pleasure you must anticipate in so soon returning home to a child—to have it all your own—to keep it always with you.”

“Yes, madam, the little dear! and I hope never to leave it again; for please God to give me another baby, I shall stay at home and suckle it; that’s the way to enjoy one’s children, and make up for the pain and trouble of bringing them into the world.”

Poor Lena turned away her head, and fairly wept.

Her period of independence was not suffered to pass without an adventure of some little interest and note—but unfortunate, in-

asmuch that it proved objectionable to the jealous, prejudiced disposition of her husband.

On one of these rambles in the park with her children, on a fine cool summer afternoon, a balmy breeze stirring the branches of the trees — the sky's clear blue unruffled by a cloud—an equestrian riding slowly along, looking with deep interest around him, came suddenly upon the party.

Lena stepped on the grass amidst the nurses to let him pass.

The stranger was a young man, of about five or six and twenty in appearance, with dark crisp curly hair, and that free open look, and unstudied carriage, which so generally mark a naval man.

His dark eye might have been seen to travel observingly, but composedly at first, over the group; but as it fell on the tall lady-like figure amongst it, an expression of more earnest interest and attention changed the expression of

his countenance ; and he gazed so earnestly, as to cause Lena to draw up her slight form with graceful dignity.

The horseman had passed on, but again turning, reined in his steed, and sprang to the ground, close to Lena.

“ May I take the liberty,” he asked, in a frank, manly voice, which sounded not quite strange to Lena’s ear, “ to ask whether it is to Mrs. Beauchamp I speak ?”

Lena bowed gracefully, but gravely, as she stepped onwards.

“ I was told all the family were away,” the stranger continued, “ or I should not have dared perhaps to intrude as I have done ; but I cannot feel sorry for the mistake, since it has forced on me a pleasure I have often longed for. Ah, you do not know me—perhaps if you did, you would frown upon me—for no doubt you have heard nothing but evil of Lionel’s scapegrace brother, Alfred.”

Lena started and coloured, but with a sweet

kind smile extended her hand, which he seized and shook with sailorlike warmth.

Lena now recognised the voice to be like that of Rachel, whom, indeed, Alfred much resembled.

She looked upon her new-found brother-in-law with sad affectionate interest as she murmured some words of welcome.

“And these are Lionel’s children!” he said. “May their wicked uncle kiss them, Mrs. Beauchamp?” and he lifted the little Rachel in his arms.

“It seems very strange all this,” he continued, restoring the child to her nurse; and walking onwards, by Lena’s side; “so changed—to come here to find all the old ones gone, and only new faces to meet and to greet me.”

“You were quite young when you left the Towers,” Lena remarked, in a low embarrassed tone.

“Yes,” Alfred answered, abruptly, “I have

spent many a merry and many a stormy day in this old place. I have weathered many a storm at sea, since; but they are nothing to *home* storms: one strong gale here sent me flying at last. But I will not talk to you about it—I cannot expect Lionel’s wife to think me any thing but a brute,” he exclaimed, with some passionate feeling. “Forgive me,” he added, seeing Lena’s look of distress, “but my mother and brother refuse to see me, or hear of me—therefore, what must you think?”

“Think, Alfred!” Lena said, in a voice of tremulous emotion; “I assure you it breaks my heart to think of all these divisions and strifes, between relations—until I married, I scarcely imagined such things could be.”

“I dare say not,” Alfred said, looking at the fair young creature, with admiring interest; “you must indeed be like a lamb amongst wolves. Ralph made me very anxious to see you, by his description. I first saw Lionel’s marriage in the papers, and often puzzled my

brain, as I swang in my hammock, to fancy what sort of a wife he could have chosen, and also what sort of a husband he would make—and I almost hoped she was of a very different sort from you.”

“Why?” Lena asked, opening wide her beautiful eyes, at this ungallant assertion.

“Perhaps because I am of no forgiving disposition, and could not, therefore, wish him to possess an angel—also, because I felt a strange sensation of interest in my sister-in-law, and wished her not to be one for whom I could desire a happier fate, than to be the slave of Lionel’s selfish——”

“Mr. Alfred Beauchamp!” interrupted Lena, “no more of this—your brother is my husband;” and she coloured painfully.

The young man was all penitence in a moment.

“Ah! forgive me, sweet sister,” he said; “I am a blunt, unthinking man, and they have treated me so heartlessly!—I wonder I have a

heart left for anybody. The numbers of letters I have written to my mother and brother, during the last many years, just to admit me to see some of them—and not a word in answer; my letters unread, I believe. On arriving in England, I heard they were all out of the way, and came to have a word with some of the old servants, and my sisters—and now I hear they are gone too. Well, at least, now I shall be able to renew my intercourse with them. I can scarcely blame Amelia, though she has made such a hash of it—and poor little Agnes !”

“Oh, naughty Agnes !” said Lena, shaking her head, with a sad smile.

“Ran away with your brother—well, what was the harm? She has chosen well, if you are a specimen of the stock. And Rachel—dear girl, is with Ralph. Ah! I still may go and sing ‘oh be joyful!’ with her—over her perfect liberty. But here we are !”

They had approached the mansion, on

which, the young man's eyes were tearfully fixed.

“And here I am,” he continued, “talking to you as if you had been my sister always, instead of the unknown sister of two years' standing—when, perhaps too, I may never be allowed to speak to you again.”

“Will you not come in?” Lena murmured, timidly.

“How I should like to do so! had I found the house empty, I must have walked over it like a visitor; but as I must now enter it in my own character, and in that character have been forbidden its walls, I suppose I must give it up—unless, indeed,” Alfred said, wistfully, “unless you will take upon yourself, your lawful authority, and give me an invitation. *Dare* you?” he asked, looking at Lena with a smile.

She was silent—hesitated, and with a perplexed distressed countenance, stood in painful embarrassment.

Alfred Beauchamp saw at once that *she did not dare*, and pressed her no further.

“ Ah! Alfred,” Lena said, as they parted shortly after, “ I shall try what I can do that you may be once more frankly welcomed to your brother’s house,” and she did her gentle best.

Mr. Beauchamp, on his return home, heard from her lips the story of his brother’s visit—Lena pleading sweetly and earnestly for the alien. Displeasure at the intrusion, as he termed it, of his brother upon her society, was the chief feature of the emotion excited in her husband’s mind. As for her intercession it fell like water upon a rock.

“ I never forgive when once offended,” was his answer, “ do *you* not offend me, Lena, by this unnecessary and fruitless supplication.”

Well might the poor young creature exclaim,
“ *Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell in Meshach and have my habitation among the tents*

*of Kedar—my soul has long dwelt amongst those
who are enemies of peace.”*

* * * * *

The Beauchamps—mother, son, wife and
children, quitted England for the Continent.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ They tell me she is happy now,
The gayest of the gay ;
They hint that she forgets me,
But heed not what they say ;
Like me, perhaps, she struggles with
Each feeling of regret,
But *if* she loves as I have loved,
She never can forget.’

HAYNES BAYLEY.

THE following spring, in the columns of the fashionable papers, appeared the name “ of the beautiful Miss Cameron” who, under the auspices of Her Grace the Duchess of Stratheden, was forming one of the brightest stars of the London season.

We may imagine with what delight Mrs.

Cameron's eyes sparkled when reading this paragraph in Ireland—what dazzling images it conjured up in her mind's eye, and how the General threw the paper aside with an amused smile, saying “ he hoped his little Annie was enjoying herself.”

Another eye gazed upon this announcement—that of a young officer, arrived that night in London—and who, with a sigh thought within himself—“ Dear Annie, then I may see you once again !” and Frank Mildmay, for he it was, caught his first view of Annie the next day in the Park. He saw that beloved face gleaming from the window of the Duchess's carriage, as she talked to a gentleman riding by its side—sparkling as the sunny wave, as if no bitter tears, such as he had seen her shed, had ever quenched the brightness of those eyes—and the young man turned away, sad and sorrowful. For though time and circumstances had taught him, doubtless, also to smile again, it had not taught him to forget his lost

—his only love. And now the sight of her revived all the former feelings of his heart, and the past was to him as yesterday.

Frank Mildmay was inconsiderate and *exigeant* enough to feel for the moment a jealous pang, when he looked upon the renovated roses and innocent gaiety which bloomed upon Annie's dimpled cheeks, in lieu of the drooping sadness which cast its shadow upon her when they parted.

He passed the house where she dwelt one evening, and beheld her from his cab, stepping lightly over the drugget, laid down for the Duchess and herself, to pass into the carriage, which was to convey them to some dinner party.

What a vision of grace and loveliness did that glimpse afford him—and how painful was the thought that the sweet smile he had caught upon her countenance was going to shed its beams around in scenes where he was not—or more dreadful still, perchance condense

its radiance on some favored *one*, whom her heart had singled out from the crowd of adorers.

But no—hope

“ That sweet little cherub who sits up aloft,”

chased the dark shadow from his heart. True she was gay and happy now—he had heard before that so it was with her—but yet she could not have quite blotted him from her recollection. He trusted too firmly in her affection—and Frank Mildmay ardently desired to meet her and speak to her once more.

Yet what could he hope? Nothing he thought, if he thought at all; all he wished was but for the assurance that she had not forgotten him. For some time opportunity failed to obtain for him the gratification of his desire. But a night at length arrived—It was a public charity ball at Willis’s rooms, under the patronage of the Duchess—Annie surely would be there.

Thither, therefore, with some brother officers he went, and found himself in that brilliant saloon, not mingling in the gay throng—but fixed in a position commanding a good view of the door—standing with pale and eager countenance—with look intent, upon the watch.

At length a party swept into the room—the Duchess with her quiet composure and unpretending dignity of mien. She was accompanied by a numerous circle; but foremost of the group was Annie Cameron, leaning on her arm, her dark eyes dancing with animation as she glanced over the brilliant scene—her graceful little form bending forward, all ready, as it were, to bound at the sound of Jullien's inspiring strains, and to mingle amongst the dancers.

She had not to wait long—seeming already to have been engaged, for she was shaking her head in refusal to many who pressed forward, and soon she disappeared with a part-

ner amidst the maze of waltzers, from the eyes of Frank Mildmay, whose first impulse on her entrance had been to start forward towards her, the next, to pause and gaze, and watch her--- every moment becoming paler and more agitated than before.

The crowd was too great to admit him, though he pressed forward, to gain a view of Annie and her partner. Only now and then his eager gaze caught a glimpse of her form in her simple robe of purest white and wreath of roses in her hair, "with a step as fleet and eye as bright" as if she had never danced that one last sad waltz of despair which preceded their parting.

The music ceased: the stream of dancers flowed into the refreshment room.

Mildmay followed. He made his way to the table, and at length found himself close to the spot where Annie stood with her ice in her hand, talking to her late partner.

He listened breathlessly to the accents of

her silvery voice. They were light and careless words—not such as *he* had heard from her.

Her partner had turned away for a moment to attend to a Dowager who had demanded his services. With a beating heart the young man seized this opportunity which left Annie unattended, and in a low, earnest voice murmured---

“Annie!”

She turned abruptly, and with a wild, startled gaze.

“Frank!” she cried, in a voice trembling with mingled emotions, in which joy predominated---“Frank!---dear Frank!” and in an instant her hands were clasped in those of her enchanted lover.

We will not expatiate upon the forgetful delight of the moment that followed this reunion—Annie’s late partner on turning again towards her, had the mortification of seeing her disappearing amidst the crowd on the arm of the young officer.

She must have mortally offended more than one that night; for engaged she certainly had been for several dances; yet for one long quadrille she was hidden from all possibility of discovery---and for the next the Duchess, who was now beginning to be uneasy at her long desertion, and on the look out for her lovely charge, saw her led forth by Frank Mildmay to join the dance; noticing her chaperone's good-natured, smiling remark of "Dear Annie, I thought you were quite lost!" by a smile, but of a brightness chastened and subdued.

Yes---whilst her partner, before so pale and dejected, was lifted to the skies with fulness of bliss---Annie, in her turn had become pale---her large eyes thoughtful and sad---her spirits seeming as much broken down as his were elevated; and yet from the same ecstatic feeling of happiness in both, sprang these different effects.

Yes---woman's heart is too soft, too weak to

bear as man's can do, the tide of emotions which rush into it under circumstances such as these. That which makes his spirit rise on the wings of hope, joy, and love, sinks hers—like a floweret bowed down by dew, drooping beneath the burden---painful even in its ecstasy.

Annie felt all this in its fullest extent---yet she had been deemed by her friends to have forgotten, or at least to have ceased to regret Frank Mildmay.

“ Ah ! little they know the heart who deem
Her sorrow but an infant's dream,
Of transient love begotten.
A passing gale which as it blows
Just shakes the rain-drop from the rose,
That dies, and is forgotten.”

Little can they know of the constancy that so firmly fixes itself in a young breast—still less can they imagine its strength of fortitude and self-denial. But we do not mean to infer that there was anything forced or unnatural in the brightness and gaiety of

spirits in which we found Annie--that the smiles dispensing delight on all around, covered a still aching, pining heart.

Her self-denial had not been so unrewarded.

The sunshine of the soul rendered only more beautiful as it glittered through the tearful mist by which her youthful grief had veiled it—again beamed forth, blessing her and all on whom its genial radiance fell—and yet in that sunshine the memory and constancy of her first affection had not perished. Frank Mildmay was far from being forgotten. In her heart her first love lay, not dead, but sleeping—like a sweet blossom that has folded all its leaves from the notice and light of the world.

“Who was that, dear Annie?” the Duchess enquired, as they rattled away homewards that morning from the ball.

“Who, dear Duchess, do you mean?” Annie asked with hesitating voice and timidly blushing cheeks.

“ That good-looking young officer who put you into the carriage, and who has been so monopolizing to-night.”

“ That—that,” Annie murmured, turning her truthful eyes full upon her Grace—her face in one bright glow, “ that was Frank—I mean Mr. Mildmay ; do you not remember him, Duchess ?”

“ Mildmay—Frank Mildmay—oh, Annie, naughty girl—you do not mean to say it was him ?” the Duchess began with playful reproach and alarm. “ For my sake, pray take care—do not let me incur your mother’s lasting anger and reproach. Remember, I am responsible for every consequence which may befall.”

“ Ah !” Annie murmured with a pathetic sigh, and quiet tone of resignation, “ you need not be afraid. I have told him it must never be again, as it once was between us—as it was to-night when we could not but be so glad to see one another.”

This artless declaration of her ingenuous charge seemed to have perfectly reassured the gentle Duchess—little versed or experienced in *les affaires de cœur*. Besides the fact was, that to speak in a worldly sense, she was far from being the most expedient guardian to whom a match-making mother could securely—as far as matrimonial views were concerned—have committed the chaperonage of a daughter.

Her Grace would have been only too delighted to have served and gratified her friend by obtaining a splendid match for Annie, but after all, the noble chaperone was but a kind friend—not a mother with every feeling of interest and affection bent on her anxious aim—neither was she a chaperone in whose nature existed that busy manœuvring loving spirit, which often renders her even more efficient than a mother herself.

In short the Duchess proved the most agreeable and most indulgent of cicerones—one ex-

actly calculated to render a young and unworldly spirit perfectly happy---for there was no pushing forward or pulling back---no chilling lectures on eligibility or ineligibility. She was pleased, as her lovely charge was pleased and admired---but she did not watch with very vigilant minuteness, who pleased the young girl most, or by whom she was most admired.

There were two individuals, at least, most unexceptionable, whom it required very little watching to discover, were taken captive by Annie's charms; and the Duchess felt certain that all must continue *couleur de rose* as it had began. No fears disturbed her at the re-appearance of Annie's old lover. So good and dutiful a child, she felt confident would rather die than displease her parents. So again and again in public and in private they dined and sat together unquestioned and unnoticed. Young Mildmay did not dance or talk to Annie half so much after all as many others, and Annie had said---"It could never

be between them as it had been," and what Annie said was always so true, so perfectly to be relied upon. Annie had, she knew, mentioned in her letters home the fact of having met her old lover, and the Duchess also mentioned the circumstance, but fearlessly and lightly, amidst details of attention and admiration recorded for the gratification of her friend.

And it was but one week after, that Mrs. Cameron's happy well-pleased answer arrived; she either from policy or real fearlessness treating the communication almost as lightly.

"So, dear Annie had really seen her poor little lover—however, she had no fears—she relied too firmly on her good sense to conduct her in the matter."

They had met but a very few times then—yet Annie sighed as she read these words. Another week passed, and another—they had met still less. But alas! once, once would have been sufficient for the young hearts that

already had loved—a word, a look, almost sufficient to re-unite them.

At the end of these few weeks there came a sudden startling turn in the smooth flowing tide.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“I would forget that look, that tone
My heart hath all too dearly known,
But who could ever yet efface
From memory love’s enduring trace ?

Fruitless as constancy may be,
No chance, no change, may turn from thee,
One who has loved thee wildly, well,
But whose first love-vow breathed---farewell.”

L. E. L.

“ANNIE,” exclaimed her Grace one morning, her eyes glistening with pleasure and satisfaction, “how charmed your dear mother will be !”

Annie had been seated, silently watching the

perusal of a letter she had just before given into the Duchess's hands.

It was a proposal of marriage from one of the best *partis* in London—the aspirant having followed in the train of the lovely Miss Cameron during the few months of her spring campaign—one whom many were set to capture for themselves or others, noble, young and rich.

Fortunate Annie, fortunate chaperone, still more fortunate Mrs. Cameron, how pleased indeed would she have been !

This thought was too much for Annie's heart to bear---the tears rolled down her cheeks.

“ Why did he write ? ” she murmured. “ I am sure I never intended to give him any right to think I loved him—and I should have been spared the pain of doing that which I know will so much disappoint poor Mama.”

“ Disappoint her ! then do you not mean to

accept Lord B——, Annie? Well, well, my dear child, do not weep so bitterly—your mother need not hear of this affair, and I doubt not you will have some other opportunity, perhaps more to your taste before the season is over; we are not obliged to let your Mama into all our little secrets—you are my child for the present, you know---I do not urge you to accept Lord B——, particularly if there is one amongst your other admirers you think you can like better.”

But Annie still wept—the large tears falling faster and faster, and with passionate fervour, as if from some deeper emotion than that which her words seemed to express.

It was most painful to her kind friend to see those bright eyes thus overflowing, and such a change from its wonted radiance to almost agonized despair, on the sweet countenance of her charge.

“Annie, dear Annie, pray do not give way to this useless sorrow—all you have to do is

to answer this letter, or I can do it for you, that is the extent of the misfortune."

"Oh no, dearest Duchess," Annie exclaimed, her tears suddenly ceasing, and turning her earnest eyes full upon her friend, "this is *not all*—I have perhaps deserved it, but I did not think I should feel all this misery again—and to give you annoyance, after all the trouble and kindness you have bestowed upon me—and even more...to grieve and disappoint my dear anxious mother!—I know I shall do all this, but I must not deceive you—I must tell you all—that not only I cannot accept this man, but no other person whom you would consider desirable—no, it would be a grievous sin were I to think of marrying—for I can never love but one—and he—"

Her head drooped upon her bosom, and the rest of her speech was inaudible to the ears of the Duchess. But a sudden qualm seized the spirit of her Grace—a spectre in the shape of the young man with the interesting melancholy countenance, following

wherever she moved, the steps of Annie. All the horrors of chaperonage assailed the noble lady as laying her hand on Annie's arm she said in a nervous tone,

"Not Mr Mildmay I hope my dear child."

"Yes even so—Frank Mildmay!" Annie repeated, with a sigh of quiet despair, covering her face with her hands.

A pause ensued.

"This is very unfortunate," the Duchess at last murmured with a troubled, perplexed countenance. "I have been very imprudent."

"Oh no dear Duchess not you—it is I, and Frank who have been imprudent—but indeed we must have forgotten how much we loved each other—and we fancied, at least I did, that there was no danger. I did not allow Frank to dance with me more than any of my other partners. We met only as friends—but soon his resolution gave way, and again he spoke to me of love—I would not listen to him at first,

but oh! I soon felt my heart too weak, too fond, too much again all his own, and now—and now !”

“Annie, Mr. Mildmay must go; it was very wrong of him to come at all into your presence being so little confidant of command over his feelings—that is all that can be done—and *you* my dear will I am sure endeavour to conquer the weakness which this imprudent renewal of intercourse has revived for a brief space. I know you will exert yourself for my sake—for your parents’ sake—you must not distress them by the useless communication of what has passed—you will recover from this passing weakness and all will be well again.”

Annie shook her head mournfully and hopelessly.

“Oh no, dear Duchess; I feel now as if it never could be right again with me, and that if Frank and I were forced to part, my heart would *indeed* break.”

“But my dear Annie,” the Duchess pleaded

in an anxious tone of concern, "if he stay, and you meet again, it must be with your parents' sanction, I must write to your father or mother."

"I know you must," Annie sighed; "it is very terrible to have to vex them so—but" she added clasping her hands with sorrowful fervour, "they will be kind and pitiful; they must know that I would not willingly have brought this upon them. I little imagined the love that was subdued but not extinguished, could return with such overwhelming power—Yes," she added "write to them, dear Duchess, and perhaps they will come, and though it may be but to crush my hopes once more—perhaps to reproach me—still that would even be better than to be parted from them in my misery."

"Hopes, dear Annie, have you any hopes?" asked the Duchess.

"I scarcely know," Annie sighed. "Sometimes Frank and I are so bold as to talk of hope together; for why—why should two

hearts so fondly attached, be forced to part? We are older now—two years have passed—our love has been tried by absence—and yet we still feel the same towards each other. It is no idle fancy *our* love. It's strength is sufficient to make up for the lack of all other advantages—want of fortune—of worldly riches—although Frank has enough we think, nay more, than to satisfy our wishes. Yes; and with so much love for our mutual support, what can harm us? It is my happiness alone my parents seek—I know it is—then can they wish to make me truly wretched?"

The gentle Duchess was electrified by this outburst of poor Annie's feeling, and the strength and purity of the "love to agony distress" it seemed to manifest; for it was not what she was accustomed to come in contact with in these cold, calculating days—or as she might have said a little later, in these wilful days, when maidens seem to follow, without ceremony, their own desires, never allowing

duty to strive their selfish inclinations against. The Duchess was much affected by the pure beauty of Annie's attachment.

“And what indeed is more holy than female love in its first force and purity—before the world has chilled it, or *repetition* sullied the exquisite bloom of its purity and abandonment. It is one of the highest and most intense of the mysteries of human nature—one of the most beautiful of its phenomena—the most lovely of its impulses. The sophisticated may sneer at its simple feelings—the corrupt may mistake its purity for coldness; but that very simplicity is the cause at once, and the effect of its strength; the very purity of the flame betokens its intense heat.”

And was Frank Mildmay to blame if such love, which even on the first evening of their re-union, in the full confidence of the utter unreserve of young and innocent affection, had flowed unwittingly from Annie's eyes and mantled on her glowing cheeks, when she

turned to speak to him who had never lost his place in her heart---could the coldest nature blame him that he acted thus, in spite of all that had doomed their union an impossibility?

In the interval that elapsed between the dispatch of the Duchess's vexatious letter---vexatious both to her own feelings, and to those whom it addressed---and the expected answer---her Grace thought it proper to put an entire veto upon any intercourse between the lovers.

She wrote therefore by Annie's desire to Frank Mildmay, informing him of the step she had taken, telling him that the Duke and herself deemed it advisable that he should avoid the society of Miss Cameron till the presence or sanction of her parents was obtained.

For the next week therefore, many were the conjectures afloat as to what had so dimmed the bright smiles of the ball-room favorite Annie Cameron, and changed the animated glances of her eye--

“ All fearless in its purity.”

to that anxious look of care.

Perhaps not a few might have marked at the opera (wondering who amongst its occupants might be the object of its attraction,) her glance directed to the stalls, where with a lover's eager glance, she had discerned what none else in her position might have done, her adorer seated with upraised, melancholy eyes, silently worshipping his beloved one, the only means now afforded to him without transgressing the Duchess's request—or rather command---of indulging in that dangerous enjoyment. There he would sit, his eyes and heart fixed upon that one little being in the brilliant assembly, *as if she alone was there---*

“ Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.”

And in what changeeful dreams was his spirit lost, as now, hope, of which Annie was wont to be the emblem---now despair, which her

present altered countenance seemed more fitted to express, irradiated or bowed it down.

Many there that night supposed it likely she was sorrowing in repentance, for Lord B——, whom it was reported had been rejected, and had set off for the continent in consequence of his disappointment.

The morning arrived when with every reasonable allowance a letter from Ireland, in answer to the Duchess's despatch, might be expected. But the post brought it not; in the evening however a surer answer came, in the shape of the General himself. He pressed Annie fervently and silently in his arms as she flew into his embrace; and leant back her head to gaze timidly upon his countenance, that she might there seek to read her fate.

But the General looked pale and grave, and Annie hid her face once more upon his bosom, her heart dying within her.

Nothing however further passed on the subject then, for the Duchess was present and began

asking irrelevant questions to avert the immediate entrance upon that, which from the General's countenance she equally dreaded for her dear little charge.

Annie heard her father say in answer to the Duchess's enquiries about her friend Laura, as the poor girl stood pale and trembling by his side, her hand pressed in his—that her mother would much have liked to accompany him, but the plan was rendered impossible by the illness of her daughter-in-law, who by her imprudence and heedlessness had brought on a premature confinement of a dead child, and was too ill for Mrs. Cameron to think of leaving her.

“Poor Agnes!” Annie murmured, but her heart was scarcely with her words.

She followed her father when the time came for the party to leave the room to dress for dinner; silently they ascended together to the room prepared for the General, his arm caressingly encircling the waist of his darling daugh-

ter, the beating throbs of whose heart he must have felt.

But when they stood within the room, and after he had again tenderly embraced her, Annie fixed her eager, enquiring gaze upon him.

The General turned away almost, as it seemed, impatiently, saying—

“We must dress—my dear girl let us not talk on the subject yet, for Heaven’s sake.”

“Oh, Papa only one word,” she said beseechingly, “do not keep me in suspense, only *one* word. Is there any hope?”

“My dearest child,” the General answered hurriedly, “it is not a business to be despatched in one word, so let us wait till we have time to discuss it more fully. Here! I have a letter for you from your mother, which you shall read after dinner, and before we go to bed—”

He had drawn the said letter from his pocket

when a valet's opportune entrance saved the General further trouble in evading or entering upon the subject from which he seemed to shrink with such ominous dislike. Annie took possession of the letter and flew with it to her room. The maid was waiting to dress her: she was forced therefore to suffer her to unbind her hair, and prepare for its arrangement, but forgetting all in her anxiety and absorption, she hastily broke the seal and opened the letter.

Eagerly, with beating heart, her eyes glanced over its contents—No harsh, or even reproachful expression was there to wound her—but the language of complaint mingled in the strains of the most gentle tenderness that ever mother addressed to a daughter—to her Annie, the lightener of all her parents' weight of care—the bright star in the midst of all their troubles and anxieties—to whom they ever turned for hope, in contemplating her prospects for the future.

“ But if the prophecies are mournful of what avail the speaker's voice ?”

All this but conveyed to Annie the death blow to her rekindled hopes.

Alas! the old story of two years before, but with stronger, and even more irrevocable arguments followed to speak their doom.

Her mother, after an affecting summary of her cares—her increasing burdens and perplexities, expatiating upon her own decreasing buoyancy of spirit to support her, added that she reposed with perfect confidence and security upon her beloved child, whose well regulated mind, would at once resign itself to filial obedience, who would not she was sure willingly add one *item* to the load of trouble under which her parents struggled. It would break her heart, and send her father to the grave with disappointment to see the daughter for whose welfare such bright hopes had been raised, throw herself away by so improvident a marriage. Alas! they had but too true a specimen of the imprudence of love matches, in her brother Gerald's case—in the accession

of care which the thoughtless act of one of their children had entailed upon them.

Poor Annie, she had dismissed her maid, and when her father entered to lead her down to dinner he found the poor girl seated—her dark hair streaming around her in hopeless despair.

“My own Annie, I cannot bear this,” he said, after gazing on her for a moment, and tears rolled down his manly cheek.

Annie started at the sight.

“*He* weeping for me,” she thought, “oh! no, no, no! Father, dear father!” she exclaimed rising and throwing her arms round his neck. “I am better—much better now; go down to dinner, and when you see me again I shall be quite well—it was only at first, and Mama’s letter is so kind—so affectionate; oh! you will see how I *can bear* it,” she added with a sad smile, “for her sake and yours.”

We will not enter into all that transpired the next day. Suffice it to say that even the father’s fond, indulgent heart had

nerved itself to listen to the dictates of prudence which bade him, for the supposed advantage of his child, harden himself against its contrary impulses, assisted as he was in his difficult task by the noble fortitude, the meek heroism with which his daughter saw all lingering hopes vanishing away. For her father had looked into the aspect and prospect of poor Frank Mildmay's affairs; alas! they were not more bright or promising than two years before, and Annie, with pale, yet wonderful composure of voice and countenance, resigned herself to necessity, and relinquished all hope.

She asked only to be allowed to see Frank Mildmay again, and from her own lips communicate to him the final sentence.

“Who but I, can soften the shock that sentence will occasion,” she thought; “who but his poor Annie inspire him with fortitude and resignation?”

“Can you not trust me, father?” she said as the General spoke dubiously as to the judiciousness of acceding to the proposition.

CHAPTER XIX.

—Yet 'tis a weary task to school the heart,
 Tho' years or griefs have tamed its fiery spirit
 Into that still and passive fortitude,
 Which is but learned from suffering.

MRS. HEMANS.

* * *

Where can we turn for succour?

* * *

When we are wretched, where can we complain ;

* * +

Where can we go to meet a warmer eye,
 With such sure confidence as to a Mother?

JOANNA BAILLIE.

AND they went that night to Almacks. Poor Annie ! she looked indeed a very different creature, as she entered leaning on her father's arm, from the blooming Hebe, who four weeks before, gleamed upon her lover's sight.

Frank Mildmay saw her enter.

“Dear Annie,” the young man thought, “your brightness is indeed dimmed, and I have been the blighting cause.”

He pressed through the crowd in the direction of the spot where the General stood with his daughter,—his eyes as anxiously and nervously glancing round, as those of the young creature leaning on his arm.

Mildmay soon stood by their side. The General shook the young man warmly by the hand; but there was an expression of pain and concern upon his manly countenance. Annie had soon slipped her arm from within his, and the father was the next moment following with his eyes, the pale young couple, as they made their way to the refreshment room. What a different hour was there spent, to that which had hidden the much sought beauty from her eager partner's view, four weeks ago. Then, even hope had been at rest, and it had been happiness sufficient of itself,

to know that they were again together. The past had been as a dream—the future uncared for they thought—felt nought, but that they were *side by side*, and now?——

“Oh, Frank! why are we to endure all this agony again? I thought it too hard to endure, two years ago, but now it seems so far—far worse.”

Annie had told her tale, and Frank in mute despair, was leaning forward, his eyes bent upon the ground. He answered not, and both sat for some time in mournful silence.

“Annie,” Frank at length murmured, “is there no hope left of winning your parents’ consent?”

“None, Frank.”

“And, why?”

Annie only sighed deeply.

“And yet you say,” Frank continued, “that their chief aim is your happiness.”

Again a heavy sigh.

“Oh Annie, were we only married,” the

young man said, bending down his eyes, as if to avoid meeting the gaze of his companion. "If we were once married, and they saw how sufficient was our love, to constitute our happiness—how few were the trials—the sacrifices your marriage had entailed upon you—for do you think, Annie, I would ever allow you to suffer deprivation? would it not be my study, my labour to ward off every blast of trouble or of sorrow, which my power could stay? what would I not do? what sacrifice would I not make to secure your comfort, dearest?...when they saw how happy you were—how I adored you, then would they not be joyful too?"

"I do not understand you, Frank," Annie said sadly and hopelessly.

"Oh, Annie," Frank continued in a low, hurried voice, "if you loved as I love, you would not be so slow of comprehension—you would know what I mean; can we not do as others have done before us—marry, and

trust to your parents' love—to their indulgence, to reconcile them to the step. Annie—” and he seized her hand, “can you—can you refuse me? Will you not fly with me? Is your love not strong enough for that?”

Annie turned her head slowly away, but it was only to collect her bewildered senses.

“Your brother,” Frank Mildmay persisted, “how did he win his wife?”

“Frank, Frank, I never thought you would have become my tempter!” exclaimed Annie, and she turned her clear eyes upon him with sad, sweet reproach. “But you cannot be serious—you cannot mean what you ask me to do.”

“I only ask what others have done, for love such as you profess for me, Annie.”

“*Profess!*”—the cold word wounded Annie’s heart. She hid her face in her hands, and sobbed.

Frank thought he had prevailed—

“Think, think,” he urged, “all our misery

in a few hours may be at an end for ever—that misery which must else be everlasting.”

Annie shuddered.

“Do you shudder at the idea of flying with me?”

“Yes, Frank, even with *you*—at the idea of having yielded even in thought, to such an act—to betray the love and confidence which my parents so implicitly place in me—to send bitter sorrow, shame and disappointment into their kind hearts. But I could not,” she continued passionately, “deceive my father, my darling, kind, noble-minded father, who feels for me almost as painfully as I feel for myself. Do you think, Frank, that I could appear before him with such a secret purpose in my heart—and conceal it—I could not if I would—I could not hide it in my face—in my voice. You have seen the truth and openness with which we are all brought up, and do you wish to make one of that family a deceiver—an ungrateful, graceless daughter? It

would destroy the peace of all—yes ruin us—destroy us, Frank—my father would never hold up his head again, as he has done ; his glory would, indeed, have departed.” And Annie lifted up her face, beaming through its tearful sadness, with truth and purity of intention. Deeply pained she abruptly rose, murmuring---

“ Take me to my father.”

“ Annie, Annie, forgive me ; but I am a miserable, wretched man.”

Annie placed her hand tenderly in his ; she could not speak.

The General, almost before he was aware of their approach, found his pale daughter again on his arm, but was saved the sight of the agonized countenance of her conductor. He had resigned her and vanished.

“ My brave, good girl !” the father murmured, as a short time after he beheld the countenance of his daughter, composed, though so pale, and heard her voice calmly re-assuring his own anxiety.

"You were, made my child, for a soldier's daughter," the General soothingly exclaimed.

"And a soldier's wife, Father," Annie added with a smile, and then sighed as if her heart were breaking.

Three weeks after this last scene, Mrs. Cameron was crossing the Channel with feelings, far from an enviable nature.

Daughters! daughters! She had just left one narrowly saved from the gates of death—and now was hurrying to the spot where, as by a sudden blight, her pride, her flower of promise, on which all her bright hopes were fixed, was languishing—drooping—fading they told her—and what was worse, in the mother's secret soul there was the bitter knowledge, that it was herself who had caused the mischief. Yet, did she even now feel inclined to draw out the weapon which rankled in the wound—to speak the word which alone could heal it? For she knew by the General's letters, that it was but for her to say "well, let it be," and every

prudent scruple, every wordly view which moved him, would melt away. Annie had borne up for some little time as bravely as she had begun. Frank Mildmay had left London it was thought, and that she might not have time and opportunity to brood over her sorrows, in mistaken kindness she was taken out every night, and in order to re-assure her father, who accompanied her, watching for every smile, listening for every word with such tender solicitude, she did, poor girl, endeavour to assume a show of cheerfulness in the gay scenes now so distasteful to every feeling, and so successfully as sometimes to deceive her anxious friends.

But truly, in Haynes Bayley's sweet words she might have sighed—

“ From sport to sport they hurry me
To banish my regret,
And when they win a smile from me
They think that I forget.”

But the effort proved at length above the

actual strength of her young heart---Annie's spirits suddenly sank beyond the possibility of rallying. One morning after an assembly in which she had shone with most unnatural lustre as its brightest gem, she appeared with the most ghastly pallor on her cheeks and a deadness and languor of eye; and when questioned by her anxious father and friends, for the first time since the termination of her love affair, the poor girl gave way to a violent burst of emotion, and sobbed on her father's bosom an anxious prayer for her mother.

Beautiful example of the magic power dwelling in the name of Mother!—that power which in its simple, unadulterated influence on the heart of the child, may be honoured as the type of that higher, holier relationship subsisting between a christian and his God! the simple, childlike faith which moves him to look up in joy, with love and praise to the Giver of every good thing—in sorrow to stretch out his arms to that same All-wise Being—to

look for comfort, confide implicitly on the hand by which the wound may have been inflicted, even though the dart has entered into his very soul.

And our poor Annie!--when her heart and strength began to fail, she called for the mother on whose kind bosom her young griefs had ever been soothed, whose eyes had ever kindled gladness in her soul--no shade of accusation or reproach entered into her filial heart. Yet might she not have exclaimed in the bitterness of her soul, and been forgiven--"Is this a mother's love, to break a daughter's heart?" But there was no sign of reproach in Annie's look and voice, when she strove to smile a cheerful welcome in her mother's face.

Mrs. Cameron was shocked--nay distracted at the change in her darling child, whose patient suffering cut her to the heart. As for the General--he fairly declared that he could not endure the sight of it any longer--and

doubted much as to whether the conduct they were pursuing did not amount to cruelty.

Mrs. Cameron made no reply to this, but her silent uneasiness told perhaps more surely that a struggle had already commenced in her mind—a painful struggle indeed, when it was the destruction of her brightest and long cherished hopes; and which if based on pride and worldliness renders the pang even more bitter and mortifying.

But however hard the combat, the force of maternal tenderness and love prevailed at last. Mrs. Cameron entered her husband's presence the third morning after her arrival, her countenance more quiet and composed, than it had been since her arrival, though pale and subdued; and yet she had come for the purpose of telling him that she was vanquished also—even to implore her husband to sanction the marriage of their poor Annie with Frank Mildmay.

Gently—cautiously, the parents allowed the

light of hope and joy to break in upon the young heart so darkened by despair.

“God bless you, Father—God bless you Mother!” were the only words spoken by Annie, to pour forth her feelings in her mother’s arms—but there was that in their fervent accents which spoke a fullness of joy, no tongue can express.

What now remained to be done, but to trace and discover the disconsolate lover, and draw him from the depth of despair into which he had plunged, to the new light and life in store for him?

Frank Mildmay had soon received an intimation from the General that his presence was required at Stratheden House.

We need not attempt to describe the feelings with which the summons was obeyed, far less those which filled his heart when the hand of Annie was placed by her parents in his own--- Annie, his beloved, whose heart had nearly

broken, from their separation, as her altered appearance so plainly bespoke.

And the parents told him, they gave up a treasure with which they owned they were loth to part, but it was to make her happy, and they did not repent—he must be worthy to have gained the love of such a heart.

CHAPTER XX.

They parted---soon the paths divide
Wherein our steps were one,
Like river branches, far and wide,
Dissevering as they run,
And making strangers in their course,
Of waves that had the same bright source.
Met they no more ?

MRS. HEMANS.

Love guard thee gentlest ! and the exile's woe
From thy young heart be far.

IBID.

“ And *now* dear Cecilia do you still sigh for
daughters ? ”

It was three months after the events we last
related, that Mrs. Cameron thus abruptly ad-

dressed her friend, *apropos* doubtless to the thoughts over which, whilst resting from the labours that had engrossed her all the morning, she was brooding some time in silence.

The Duchess had returned the day before to her ducal residence in London, in which the present scene was enacted, and where the Camerons had been staying for some time. The room in which we find them was filled with preparations for a wedding, in the superintendence of which the mother was employed.

Her eyes were red with weeping—her face pale, and worn with care and worry.

The *trousseau* seemed to be on rather an extended scale, yet one, of a nature not very accordant with the season now advancing—the winter month November.

No—the truth was—in the burning climes of the east—the sultry tropics—were the thin robes and delicate vestments designed, to deck young Annie's lovely form.

The — Hussars received a sudden order to embark for India the following month, and Frank Mildmay was not one willingly to desert his post; indeed the prospect of obtaining his troop, immediately on his arrival in India, made the plan a matter of grave consideration and importance.

“But Annie!—must he leave her? or could he carry her from her friends and country to risk the uncertainty and perils of a distant foreign land?” Yet to the latter alternative he was but too soon reconciled, for Annie had pledged herself to be a soldier’s wife she said, and the chances and changes natural to that condition she must abide. She was astounded that he deemed her love so weak, that fear of clime or country would suffice either to part them, or turn him from his duty.

“But your parents!” Mildmay urged.

“Frank! they have given me to you—they will not now draw back—my father knowing too well what is a soldier’s duty—my mother the duty of a soldier’s wife.”

“But Annie can you endure the idea of going so far away—of parting from your parents, sisters, brothers, and for me alone?”

Annie turned away her head with a pang of sudden pain at the suggestion—and the next words she murmured tearfully.

“Yes, Frank, I can bear even *that* for *you*—and *now* are you content? I can give no stronger proof of the love you seem so prone to doubt.”

And so it was ordained to be---and some part of the feelings which called forth the exclamation of Mrs. Cameron, from which we have so long digressed, it is not difficult to imagine. For the first of the many times too that her friend had put that same question to her, the Duchess hesitated as to her answer.

The Duchess, with her smooth, placid brow ---her eye so calm---no trace of care bringing with it the marks of middle age!—yes, she was beginning after all to think that with all the

pleasures attached to the blessings for which she had so long sighed in vain ; it might indeed be true, as in the case before her, that there were very plentiful, nay, almost counteracting proportions of pain, cares, and vexations of spirit annexed to such possessions.

“ And it is my own fault in a great measure I am perfectly aware,” Mrs. Cameron continued, as her friend evasively attempted some reviving encouragement concerning Annie’s prospects. “ My extreme anxiety for that which I know I should leave to Providence to direct has brought these things upon me ; my dream has ever been the brilliant marriages of my daughters ; and I have have been repaid in my presumptuous aspirings in my unfortunate success in poor Lena’s case. It was a brilliant marriage assuredly---but how has it turned out ; and now, my grievous frustration and disappointment in my hopes for that beautiful creature, Annie. Yes,” she continued, seeing a slight smile curl the lip of the

Duchess at this last clause, "my worldliness in spite of my conviction, is, I fear, though chastened, unsubdued; yes, dear Cecilia, I feel it with shame; and what is worse," Mrs. Cameron added, with a very genuine sigh, "I am confident that the feeling will never be rooted out to the end of the chapter; and that till all my daughters are married, I shall wish and strive, and spend my days in vanity and my years in trouble, till I am a perfect wreck."

"Oh! I hope not, dear Laura," the Duchess soothingly answered, with a look of almost ludicrous alarm and sympathy, at the earnest, energetic countenance of her self-denouncing friend—that true representation of Martha "troubled about many things" yet not persuaded to choose "that better part which would not be taken away from her."

* * *

"Where is Annie?" enquired Mrs. Cameron as her husband entered a few minutes after, "she has been sadly wanted. Ah! I

had forgotten," she added with a heavy sigh, " she is gone to poor Lena !"

* * *

We will follow Annie to the interview.

A few weeks before, the Beauchamps had arrived in London from the continent to spend a short time there, *en route* for the Towers.

The General and Mrs. Cameron had seen Lena once or twice, and after some little demur and delay, Annie had gained permission to visit her.

The young bride elect, with bloom and brightness renovated, walked with a light step, but somewhat oppressed and nervous spirit through the rows of servants, from one to another of whom, she was transferred up the broad staircase of the Belgrave Square Mansion, till ushered finally into the luxurious apartment, in the midst of which with her gentle loving smile of welcome, her dear sister stood forth to welcome and encircle her in her arms. But of what a different spirit spoke the

quiet fervour of her pressure? to that with which the creature of hope flew to receive and return the embrace!

They sat down together—they gazed on each other's face; they had not met since Annie's visit to the Towers.

“ And darling Annie is very happy?” Lena said with a gentle smile of sympathy; “ but I need not ask that—I read it in your countenance.”

“ I am—I am, dear Lena, very---very happy, but I have been---oh! so miserable since last I saw you!”

“ Yes dearest but that is past, and your joy is now only the brighter,” said the sister.

“ Oh Lena I think so indeed,” Annie answered, with an eager smile; “ I wish, Mama thought as you do, but she will see what a bright lot her kind permission has secured for her little Annie; happier far, than if all the *great things* she coveted for me, had been my portion.”

A deep low sigh heaved from the breast of the mistress of that princess like apartment, as the speaker's animated eye instinctively and unwillingly looked around, as if there she found an exemplification of her theory.

Annie heard it, and her delicate perception quickly guessed its cause, and she grieved to have provoked the feeling.

"We shall be very poor, Mama says," she continued, as if for her sister's sake she would have dimmed her own bright picture, "and they say we must look forward to care and anxiety in after days. Mama would fain have saved me from the troubles which she now experiences from smallness of income &c. &c. troubles you, dear Lena can never endure."

Lena turned away her head with no sigh or tear, but with an expression which made her countenance almost as a stranger to Annie; and so it well might be, for it was a strange shadow to flit over that sweet patient face—bitterness!—The expression had passed away

when she again looked towards her sister, and as if passing over the latter part of her speech and referring to the former, Lena said, with a sweet playful smile "to hide the sigh beneath—Yes, dear Annie, love is better than house and land, and you will have plenty of that between you and Mr. Mildmay, if all I am told be true."

Annie blushed and smiled and owned to the truth of that report, nay that all report could scarcely tell the one half of the love they bore to each other; and all that she did say of her gallant lover to justify the affection on her part, and also to make him appear in glowing colours before her sister's imagination, it would take too long to repeat.

"And now, my own sweet Lena, tell me something about yourself," added Annie.

"Ah Annie, what shall I tell you?" she said; "after your sunny story, mine would be a very still, shady relation."

“ You have been abroad—did you not enjoy it ?” asked Annie.

“ Yes,” Lena answered in a hesitating, languid tone.

“ And the darling children, are they not your great delight ?” continued Annie.

An expression of greater pain than Annie had yet witnessed, stole over her sister’s countenance, as she murmured in a low, hurried voice---

“ They are, indeed, sweet darlings.”

“ When will they come home ? I do so long to see them,” Annie continued, having before enquired for them and been informed that they were out.

“ Soon now, I dare say ; they are driving with their grandmama.”

“ Ah, indeed ?” Annie answered quickly, her countenance changing ; and after a slight pause she continued---

“ Are they much with her ?”

“ Yes ; that is to say, they are too young

to be much with any one but their nurses ; they occasionally drive with Lady Rachel as to-day."

"Is she kind to them, Lena?" Annie enquired in an anxious tone.

"Kind to them poor little things ! I hope so indeed. Who could be otherwise, dear darlings?" said the young mother in a tone which shewed itself roused even at the idea.

"Dear Lena, forgive me ; but you must not be surprised that I am not prejudiced in favour of the idea of Lady Rachel's kindness to children, after having heard so much on the subject from Agnes ; and now she has lost all her own children—"

"She will not ill treat mine, Annie, for they are Lionel's children, and he, you know, suffers very little interference with any thing belonging to *him*."

She said this quite simply and in no spirit of irony as the words might imply. Her husband's code of selfishness had become too

natural and familiar to her spirit to call forth any criticism.

“I am glad of that at least,” thought Annie “for you then, sweet Lena, as *his* wife must also be preserved from her tyranny.”

Almost as they spoke those words the large heavy coach rolled to the door.

Annie sprang up to watch the descent of the little children from the vehicle with their nurses, but moved back almost with a look of horror as Lady Rachel stepped forth in high and mighty state, sweeping proudly and scornfully by, as she glanced fiercely upwards to ascertain who was the audacious one thus daring to shew herself at a front window and look upon Lady Rachel Beauchamp. Her voice was soon heard upon the stairs, doubtless in comment on the message which the servants had orders to give, for the children to be sent to Mrs. Beauchamp's sitting-room on their return, to see Miss Cameron.

“You need not look so frightened, Annie,”

Lena said, " Lady Rachel will not enter here ; she is not, alas ! more likely to love the sight of poor Agnes's new connexions, than they to wish to encounter her family."

Indeed not one of the Camerons had Lady Rachel deigned to notice in any way since they had been in London, and the interview of Mr. Beauchamp with the family was of the most constrained nature, which must have been truly harrowing to his poor wife's feelings.

The two lovely little children were brought in, and Lena pointed out to her sister, the likeness she loved to trace in the eldest to her own father, whilst the nurse positively insisted that the child was considered the exact image of Mr. Beauchamp.

" Oh, impossible !" Annie quickly exclaimed, " to be like both." Then remembering her indiscretion, she turned it off by declaring the little Lena the image of her namesake. " Both so fair ! Ah, Lena, at any rate neither of them are *Lady Rachel's* !"

The more Annie looked on Lena's face, and gazed at its expression—even had she not known it before—the more she would have been convinced that her sister was the victim of some one if not of Lady Rachel. The young and happy are not often quick at divining the state of the mind; the smiles that hide an aching heart too easily deceive them. But Annie could not be deceived. Lena's fate was too truly guessed at in the sorrowing perception of her family, and the sight of her sad face oppressed the affectionate girl's warm heart to bursting---and her sister looked so delicate---so worried in expression, when that piteous smile, which was so often called up, faded away, that as they continued to discourse, and Annie's thoughts were thus painfully occupied---her eyes gradually filled with tears of sisterly anguish.

“Darling Lena,” she said, taking her hand and covering it with kisses, “do you always feel well and happy?”

Again that patient heart-rending smile as Lena answered—

“ Ah, Annie does not think much of my looks, I see. Just now, dear, I have no right to feel or look very well. After May I hope I shall be more blooming and cheerful.”

“ Ah, I shall not see you then!” Annie began, but checking herself, in a gayer tone, she added---“ I suppose you wish your next to be a boy?”

“ Yes, Lionel is very anxious for a son,” Lena answered.

“ And you, Lena?”

“ I?—yes certainly for my husband’s sake—yet, still more for its own, poor little, creature. Yes,” she suddenly added, with touching fervour, “ God grant that my child may not be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman.”

Annie burst into tears.

“ Lena say not so---why have they made it so to you?”

Lena also wept.

“Lena, my own angel sister, must I go into a far distant country, and remember you always with those sad words upon your lips---oh say not that your life is always so sad as your words imply.”

“Forget those words, dearest; they were lightly, foolishly spoken: forget them—let them not mar your happiness or cloud your brow—and hopes. May there be no sadness in your lot, save that which must mingle in the cup of the happiest mortal—but should it be otherwise?---Ah, I seem to have the spirit of ill-omen to day. I know not how it is, I never felt so depressed before; but Annie, though we have seen so very little of each other since my marriage, there is something in the idea of the distance which will soon divide us—the uncertainty of our several fates, which cannot but depress two beings who grew up together, and were once so like the flowers on the same stem. Annie, though you go into a far country, where I can never follow you,

there is one blessed country—a better land—God in his mercy be praised!--where if it please Him, we shall all meet—father, mother, brother, sister,---no human power can keep us from *that privilege*. All shall there assemble, one by one, never to part again. Thank God, I have that prospect in the distance. Carry is already there—dear little Carry, who has been much with me in thought of late. Oh, Annie, no life can be hopelessly sad, cheered by that certain hope—that blessed expectation!"

* * * * *

And now must another wedding close this volume? Another *daughter's* lot in life is sealed—Shall we attend the ceremony? It was a dismal morning, the November fog veiling a scene calculated of itself, not to afford much satisfaction to the lover of gay sights; could it be a lively wedding under the circumstances attending it?

The small party around the altar were all

weeping—General Cameron led forward his daughter---her jetty hair encircled by the Orange wreath---her graceful form shrouded in the marriage veil---and the father placed her by the side of the bridegroom.

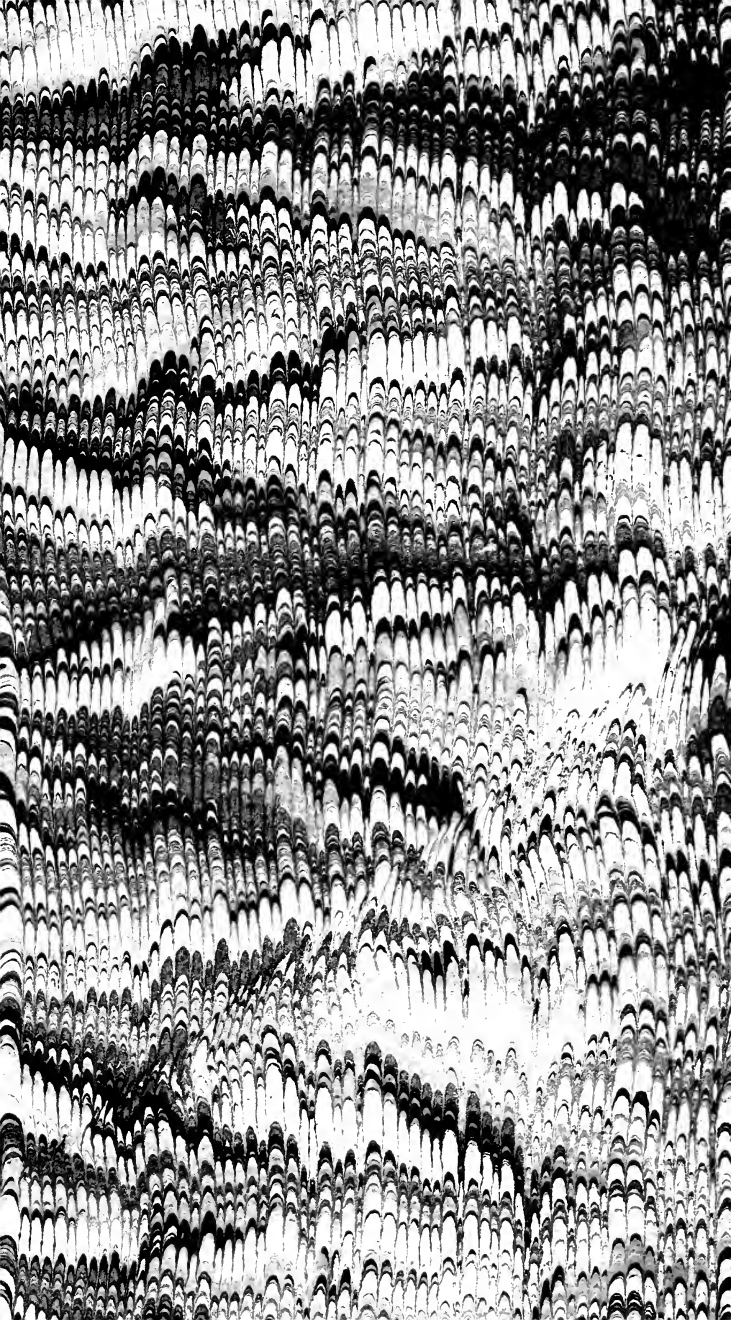
Two young sisters stood behind her, and then---

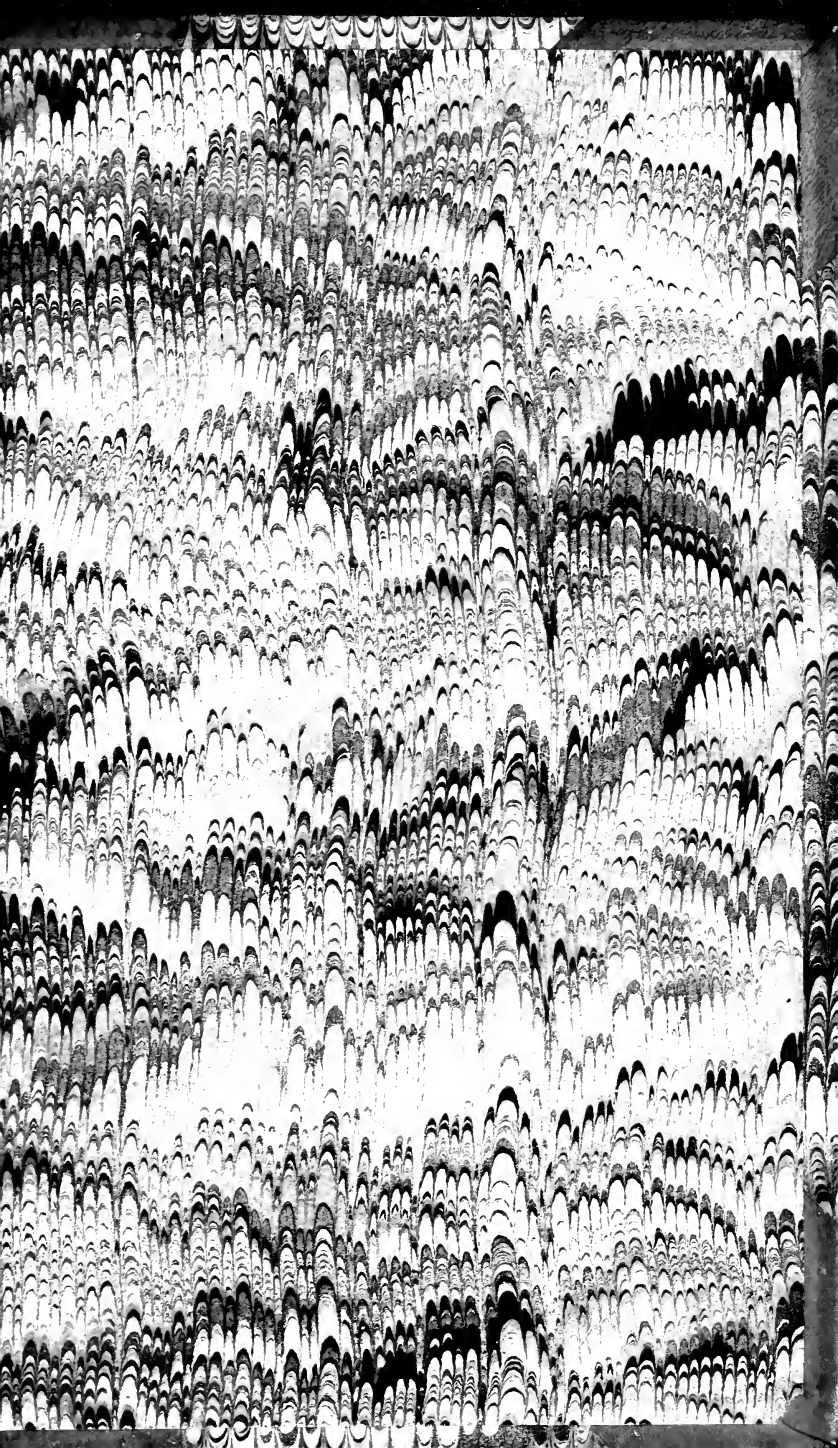
* * * * *

Soon it was all over---the words spoken--- Annie Cameron was no more ; but Annie Mildmay was pressed in the arms of those from whom she was so soon to be divided--- perhaps for ever!---her home to be in a foreign land in distant climes---

“ But standing near her side was one,
Who strove, but not in vain,
To soothe her leaving that dear home,
She ne’er might see again.”

END OF VOL. II.





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